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THE SACRED HEART

STUDIED IN THE

Sacred Scriptures.

Translated from the French of

REV. H. SAINTRAIN, C.SS.R.,

Author of "La Redempteur," etc.

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"BEHOLD HOW HE LOVED.—*St. John*, xi, 36.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:

BENZIGER BROTHERS

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

1890.

Imprimatur.

✠ JOHN, CARDINAL McCLOSKEY,

Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, *May* 30, 1884.

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APPROBATIONS TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

From Mgr. Dechamps, Archbishop of Mechlin.

"MECHLIN, April 2, 1868.

". . . Behold praise of your work by a distinguished theologian.

"Yours devotedly in Jesus Christ,

"✠ V. A. DECHAMPS,

"*Archbishop of Mechlin.*"

"'MY LORD: I have examined with most scrupulous attention the manuscript entitled "The Heart of Jesus Studied in the Sacred Scriptures." I am happy, my Lord, to be able to pronounce the work, in my opinion, a genuine masterpiece well calculated to make known the immense love of Jesus for man, and to inspire in souls a reciprocal love for their Saviour.

"'The author could have drawn only from the Heart of Jesus itself the beautiful and touching pages that he proposes to publish. This book recommends itself by a solid doctrine, drawn from the Sacred Scriptures and conforming to the teachings of our Mother, the Holy Church.

"'I thank you, my Lord, for having provided me with an opportunity of improving myself by reading this book, overflowing with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and I beg you will accept, etc.

"'F. BERNARD VAN LOO, *Recollect.*

"'MECHLIN, April 2, 1868.'"

acc. 3819

By virtue of the authority granted us by our Most Reverend Father-General, we permit the printing of the work entitled "The Heart of Jesus Studied in the Sacred Scriptures," by Rev. Father Saintrain.

J. H. P. KOCKEROLS,
Superior-Provincial of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

BRUSSELS, April 26, 1870.

Having seen the report made to me by the theologian charged with the examination of the work entitled "The Heart of Jesus Studied in the Sacred Scriptures," I not only authorize the printing of the work, but recommend it heartily to the piety of the faithful.

✠ VICTOR AUGUSTE,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

MECHLIN, May 10, 1868.

We have read with the most lively interest the work bearing the title "The Heart of Jesus Studied in the Sacred Scriptures." We trace in every page of it sound doctrine, and a vast knowledge of Holy Scripture. The easy and elegant style detracts nothing from the unction of these beautiful pages. We willingly authorize its printing and recommend it to the reading of the faithful.

✠ THEODORE JOSEPH,
Bishop of Namur.

NAMUR, May 11, 1868.

To Saint Alphonsus.

Beloved Father:

Allow the humblest of your children to lay at your feet a flower, not indeed beautiful, but exhaling the aroma of your piety. Accept it as a token of the gratitude with which the author is filled for the goodness with which you have deigned to welcome him into your house, despite his unworthiness.

He owes to you this homage on another account. In laboring to extend, according to his limited powers, the devotion of the Heart of Jesus, he has but trod (very far off indeed) in your glorious footsteps. For by your devotion, and your writings, you have hastened the day when the Church has granted to the pious wishes of the faithful the public and solemn worship of that Heart, the Friend of men.

Deign then, O great Saint, to permit this book to appear under your auspices, and bless it and the author.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The little work here presented to the lovers of the Sacred Heart essays to relate the love of the Divine Word for humanity, *first*, as it existed from all eternity; *second*, as it existed from the Creation of man; and *finally*, as it exists since His advent in our midst.

The author in no wise ignores the many works that have appeared on the same subject, and only asks a modest niche beside them. For he thinks that the Temple erected by Catholic writers to the glory of the Heart of Jesus is still far from completion. In the construction of such an edifice, not only are gold and precious stones and costly marbles needed, but also rubble and cement, as St. Paul tells us. The author will feel happy if his work may be deemed worthy of ranking with even these two meaner constituents.

It claims to have a specialty. Without entering into the details of the inner life (a task which would be beyond the writer's ability), without indicating the various ways of honoring the Sacred Heart, he has collected and arranged under suitable heads all those passages of Holy Scripture, in which the eternal and unspeakable love of the Son of God for the sons of Adam seems most touchingly displayed.

This method is a sure guarantee of the solidity of a large portion of the work. For, not content like Ruth,

to glean in the field, he has thoroughly reaped it. To this sacred grain he has merely added the binding of the sheaves and occasionally a wild field flower here and there. His aim is to make those persons not well instructed in the Scriptures a little better acquainted with the Heart of Jesus.

He will be amply compensated for his vigils if these humble pages should have the good fortune to enlighten, strengthen, and console any souls. For then he may say of them—although in an infinitely less degree—that which was formerly said of Him to whose love they are consecrated : " transiit benefaciendo."

H. S.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THERE has been no nobler contribution to the literature of Divine Love than Father Saintrain's beautiful exposition of "The Heart of Jesus, Studied in the Sacred Scriptures." It is a perfect treasury of biblical gems, each reflecting, in bright and enchanting colors, "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the love of Jesus for sinners.

Father Saintrain's work has had an immense circulation in France, and has been publicly commended by the highest authorities in the Church. The Rev. Fr. Bernard Van Loo, the distinguished theologian, appointed by the Archbishop of Mechlin to examine the work, declares that "it is a genuine masterpiece well calculated to make known the immense love of Jesus for man, and to inspire in souls a reciprocal love for their Saviour." He commends the book for its "solid doctrine taken from Holy Scripture, and its conformity to the teachings of our Mother, the Holy Church."

It has been truly said that "Father Saintrain could have drawn only from the Heart of Jesus itself the beautiful and touching lessons of love contained in this work." As the Bishop of Namur remarks: "We

trace in every page of it sound doctrine, and a vast knowledge of the Holy Scripture. The easy and elegant style detracts nothing from the unction of these beautiful pages." The translator has tried to preserve not only the spirit, but the ardor and unction of Father Saintrain's masterpiece, and prays that English-speaking Catholics may profit by the grand lessons of divine love which it teaches.

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THE HEART OF JESUS

STUDIED IN

THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER I.

What is the Heart of Jesus?

THE HEART CONSIDERED AS AN ORGAN.—THE HEART IN ITS RELATION WITH OUR AFFECTIONS.—THE HEART AS A SYMBOL.—QUALITIES AND DEFECTS OF THE HUMAN HEART.—POWER OF THE HEART OF JESUS.

"That you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge."—Ephes. iii. 18, 19.

THERE are many pious souls who do not know, as well as they ought, the precise object of the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who do not sufficiently distinguish the difference between this devotion and that of the Passion, or the Blessed Sacrament. It will therefore be well to explain in the beginning what we understand by the Heart of Jesus, and sketch briefly its qualities and its powers. This will at the same time establish its special claims to our veneration, gratitude, and love.

Every one is acquainted with that marvellous organ, which in all animated beings distributes the blood to the various parts of the body, and which we call *the heart.*

The heart makes its first appearance at the very commencement of life. Every man and every animal begins with the heart. Hardly is it formed, ere it commences that uninterrupted movement of contractions and dilatations which we call *beatings*. It is the dawn of life. Every one of those pulsations forever afterwards measures out and carries away with it one of those fleeting moments which Providence has allotted to us.* And when dissolution approaches, while the numbness of death has already invaded our other members, it is to the citadel of the heart that life retreats, fighting bravely every step, and on the arena of the heart is waged the last dread conflict with death. This is *the agony*. And when it gives up the struggle and lies motionless and fettered Death is conqueror. *Ultimum moriens*. The heart, which is the first apparent motor of our corporeal existence, also feels most acutely the action of our affections. And this because of the close union of soul and body. Joy dilates it; grief contracts it; pity melts it;† hope makes it palpitate the quicker; sorrow slowly preys upon it, and not unfrequently finally devours it.

How often do we meet those pale, melancholy forms, blighted in youth by a secret sorrow. They look like those yellowing leaves that are sometimes seen among the flowers, and make us think of Autumn ere the end of Spring. The first sharp puff of wind carries them off. One day some one tells us, "he is dead of heart disease." But in the sanctuary of the family they add with a sigh, "he died of grief."

Thus it has come to pass that mankind, as by common consent, have chosen *the heart* as the symbol of their af-

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* Job, xiv. 5.

† Lamentations, ii. 11.

fections, their passions, and especially of their love, the source of all the other affections. As by the *head*, we understand not only that part of the body so called, but frequently also the intellectual faculties, of which it seems to be the seat, so, by the *heart*, we understand more than that fleshly vessel whose function is to diffuse life through every fibre of our frame. *The heart is the man.* Man with all his variety of emotions, of proclivities, likes and dislikes; man with his wonderful admixture of strength and weakness—a sensitiveness which the slightest contact irritates and wounds, an exquisite delicacy which is the source of all his pleasures, but alas! much more of all his pains.

For, in this vale of tears, the more sensitive the heart is the larger is its share of that common heritage of suffering left us by our first parents. Not only does the man of sensitive heart feel more acutely pains that affect not men of sterner stuff, but he partakes of those that assail his beloved. The partings, of which life is full, touch him to the quick. Was it not the love of Jacob for his children, and the anxieties begotten of that love, that made him exclaim in the evening of his days, "The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few and evil"?*

By His Incarnation, the Word of God became a real son of man—true and perfect man. And this in such a way that the divine nature and the human nature subsist in one and the same divine person, the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity. In this mystery He has united to His Divinity a heart like our own, and inherited through the immaculate blood of Mary—who is our sister in Adam—the principle of our affections.

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* Gen. xlvii. 9.

Still, this heart, being that of *a God*, ought necessarily to be distinguished from all others by certain special characteristics.

The heart of the sons of men, despite the Fall, yet retains noble and godlike instincts. Paganism has produced the most admirable examples of disinterested love; friends dying for friends, husbands for wives, children for their parents. Has life anything more touching than a mother's love, anything more beautiful than a pure patriotism? Yet human affection is generally confined within narrow limits. That mother who is full of self-abnegation for her child, that husband that can scarcely support life without his departed other self, would only be slightly touched by the misfortunes of strangers. And, on the contrary, a man who is *everybody's* friend, is, in reality, *nobody's* friend. His friendship is reducible to mere politeness and a sort of vulgar benevolence. This is no reproach to the human heart. It is *limited* in its capacities, as is our intelligence. Its affections, like all natural forces, need to *concentrate* themselves in order to put forth all their energy. They are weakened by dispersion.

But we are not simply imperfect. God's divine workmanship in our souls has been marred by sin, and it is *in the heart* that it has made most havoc. We all possess a large amount of egoism. We try to dissimulate it, but every now and then certain circumstances develop it in all its ugliness. We do not find it very difficult to be generous, so long as the misery of others only calls for sympathy or slight assistance. But if we are required to sacrifice our own happiness, or even our ease, would the fortune or even the life of our neighbor weigh much with us? We are capable under such circumstances of hardening our hearts unto cruelty.

This does not ignore those grand and generous na-

tures, those heroic souls which glorify the race. But are they not rare as Genius? And would they not be rarer if Grace did not exercise its transforming powers, its standing miracle, by subduing natural selfishness, and clothing the soul with "the New Man," that is, Christ?*

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the heart of the God-Man has none of these defects. We shall try to mention some of the qualities which distinguish it from all others.

The Heart of Jesus is the most loving of all hearts.

Love always corresponds to knowledge. We cannot love those we do not know. But our love is excited and stimulated in proportion to our acquaintance with the person beloved, and by the good qualities that he possesses, or which we think that he possesses. According to this reasoning, the faculty of loving must be as immeasurable in Christ as His all-comprehending intelligence.

Knowing God, who is the infinite Good, more perfectly than all creatures will ever know Him, He loves in such a manner, that, as an ancient author puts it, all the ardor of saints, joined to that of the seraphic choirs, and that of the Queen of Angels herself, cannot reach the intensity of one sigh of the loving Heart of Jesus.

And, proportionately, it is the same in regard to His love for man. What did He perceive that was lovable in us? As St. Paul so emphatically puts it, "God for His exceeding charity loved us, *even when we were dead in sins.*" †

This is what makes God's love to us so astonishing. The tenderness of the Saviour reverses all our ideas.

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* Ephesians, iv. 24. † Ephes. ii. 5.

"God commendeth His charity toward us, because *when as yet we were sinners,* Christ died for us." *

He adds no more; let us be satisfied to plunge into this ocean without seeking to fathom it.

The Heart of Jesus is the biggest of all hearts.

The Heart of Jesus knows the whole human race and every individual member of it, and it loves them all. None are strangers to Him. We all are His "friends," His "brethren," His "members." Jesus is the only being to whom we can apply, in its fullest and noblest sense, the saying of the poet, "I am a man, and nothing that is human is strange to me."

We must bear in mind that the universality and boundlessness of the love of Jesus do not in any way interfere with its tenderness toward each individual who is its object. Fear not, O Christian soul, that Jesus loves you less because He loves all your brothers. Not only will He love you still more, but that secret jealousy which makes you long for His undivided love will be satisfied. Jesus will love you just as if you, and you alone, were with Him in the world.

Look at the sun, the most beautiful emblem of the Heart of Jesus. That glorious planet warms, vivifies every being. In the words of the Psalmist: "No one can hide himself from his heat." But does any one receive the less because it gives to all? If you gaze into a fountain on a calm day, you behold in the water the image of the reflected sun. You see its entire image in all its refulgent splendor. But think a moment. At that same instant, that same image glows in every lake and fountain and stream, in every pool by the wayside, in the dewdrop that gems the violet. And if you wend your way beside some stream or the sparkling waves of

* Romans, v. 8, 9.

the wide and flowing river, you see that same solar image follow you, stopping when you stop, going forward when you advance, crossing over to the other side with you ; and in a thousand different places a thousand different spectators may enjoy the same sight. Thus does Jesus give Himself to each and all *entire*. Thus He follows us wherever we go, wherever we are. Or rather may we not say, He never quits us ?—not like the unsubstantial reflection of the sun in the stream, but in reality.

Nor need we seek for illustrations from nature. Does not the Holy Eucharist, the special sacrament of the Heart of Jesus, render this truth vividly apparent ? Do you not receive the Body of the Lord whole and entire, while He gives Himself equally to those who kneel at your side ?

*Aspirations and Prayers.**

O adorable Heart of my Jesus ! burning with love for man ! created expressly to love mankind ! how can men despise Thee as they do, and respond so badly to Thy love ? Alas ! I have been of those ingrates who know not how to love Thee !

My Jesus ! Pardon my great sin in not having loved Thee ! Thou who art so lovable as to spend Thy whole being to induce me to love Thee. I deserve never more to be allowed to love Thee, for my great insensibility to Thy love.

But, O my Saviour, inflict not this chastisement upon me. Anything but that. Grant me grace to love Thee, and then punish me as Thou wilt.

Yet how can I fear such a chastisement, when I hear Thee continue to impose the sweet precept, " Thou shalt

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* Extracted from the works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart"?* Wilt Thou be loved by me, O my God? I long to love Thee, and only Thee, who hast loved me so well.

O love of my Jesus! Thou art my love!

O Heart of Jesus, burning with love! inflame my love! Let me not be so unhappy in the future as to live for a single moment deprived of Thy love. Take life from me rather; let me not display to the world such black ingratitude. Let not men see that after having been so beloved of Thee, and received at Thy hands such lights and graces, I can only repay Thee with contempt. O my Jesus, permit it not! Thy blood shed for me emboldens me to hope that I shall love Thee, and Thou me, forever, and that this love between Thee and me will form an unbroken bond throughout eternity. nity.

O Mary! Mother of this adorable love, thou who so ardently desirest to see Jesus loved, bind this heart of mine by the closest bonds to thy divine Son, so firmly that I may never more be separated from Him.

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* St. Matt. xxii. 37.

CHAPTER II.

What is the Heart of Jesus?—(*Continued*).

POWER OF THE HEART OF JESUS CONTINUED.—PRACTICE TAUGHT BY THE BLESSED MARGARET MARY.—ACT OF CONSECRATION.

"That you may comprehend with all the saints what is the length and breadth, and height and depth, to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge."—Ephes. iii. 18, 19.

The Heart of Jesus is the most compassionate of all hearts.

It knows everything that afflicts the human family, and each person in particular. And, far from withdrawing Himself from our midst, like the ancient sage, lest He should be saddened by the spectacle of our miseries, Jesus remains to solace us. He is the Mercy Seat,* to which there is always access night and day. We can compare Him to a temple erected in the centre of the universe and constructed with such art that the lightest sound produced here below is distinctly heard. Our most secret sigh finds an echo in the Heart of Jesus.

Some may say, however: "I can easily believe that Jesus, being God, knows all our sufferings, for He is omniscient; but can it be possible that He experiences any real compassion for them, and specially that He is moved to pity over those of each individual? What are we poor mortals but vile worms in God's sight? And has He any more pity for me when *I* suffer than I have for the wounded worm that writhes at my feet?"

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* Heb. iv. 16.

This reasoning is based upon complete ignorance of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will quote in answer to such objections the solemn words of St. Paul to the Hebrews:

"Nowhere doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold. Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a *merciful* and faithful high-priest. For in that wherein He Himself hath suffered, and been tempted, He is able to succor them also that are tempted.* For we have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things such as we are, without sin.† For every high-priest taken from among men is ordained that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins, who can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err, because He Himself also is compassed with infirmity. So Christ with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death. And whereas indeed He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."‡

What a beautiful and comforting doctrine. It signifies that Christ, who was naturally pitiful and compassionate, determined to make trial of all our miseries, except sin, in order to become pitiful and compassionate by experience; or, rather, to inspire us with a greater confidence in His compassion. For it is in the school of suffering that we acquire mercy. It is only the tree that is wounded that yields the precious balm. Thus in hours of bereavement we meet most sympathy from those who have passed through the dark valley themselves. And whereas, happily, we are spared from experiencing *all* the many

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* Heb. ii. 16, 17, 18. † Heb. iv. 15. ‡ Heb. v. 1, 2, 3, 7, 8.

forms of suffering which are man's lot, and few can say, "*all* thy heights and thy billows have passed over me,"* it was otherwise with Christ. We cannot experience a pain which He did not know. For it is probable that, from the very necessity of His desolate and forlorn condition, He suffered very much more of *physical* suffering than the Gospels tell us of. His uncomplaining patience is not to be taken as indicating an absence of pain.

Thus, in the loss of friends, who can feel so much for us as He who wept over the grave of Lazarus, in sympathy for His desolated friends?† If we are deceived by those in whom we confided, who can feel so much as He who was betrayed, sold, given up to death by His chosen one? If we groan under a weight of calumny, stung to madness by the serpent tooth of slander, who can so readily enter into our feelings as He who "endured such opposition from sinners against Himself?"‡ If we suffer mental pain a thousandfold more agonizing than bodily pain, let us find patience in the shades of Gethsemani. If we are tried in our worldly goods, or in our health; if we are reduced to poverty, or abased by contumely, He has experienced it all, and there is no phase of heart-torture with which He is unacquainted. More than this, He has *remedies* for all. He never beheld suffering without being touched by it, and never was touched but He instantly assuaged it.

Who can read without deep emotion that well-known story of Christ at the grave of Lazarus? "Jesus groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself;" His grief extorted from the bystanders the exclamation, "behold how He loved him!"§ Who so heartily participated in that

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* Psalm, xli. 8.
† St. John, xi. 33.
‡ Heb. xii. 3.
§ St. John, xi. 36.

family union as He, seated at the fireside of Bethany? Who so felt for the widow of Naim as He, who, having raised her lost son, "gave him to his mother"? The Evangelist graphically says, "When the Lord had seen, being moved with mercy towards her," * He had compassion.

Some may say, "I can understand that Jesus would be sympathetic for sufferings which He Himself participated in. It is natural for him who suffers to feel for others; but now that He is high and lifted up, throned above cherubim and seraphim, amid the endless hallelujahs of heaven, does He remember these things still? When a man here below emerges from obscurity, and is able to 'correct the mistakes of chance,' the first thing he does is to cut loose from all former associations. He blushes to meet an old acquaintance who may remind him of his former poverty. We see people born in the mire who become accidentally rich. How anxious they are to hide their origin, boasting of ancestors they never had, setting up fraudulent blazonry, and trying to assume the deportment and airs of the nobly born. Has the Heart of Jesus been able to resist this intoxicating influence of grandeur? Has it still retained its human feelings? Can it tolerate the remembrance of the crib of Bethlehem; the coarse swaddling clothes; the lowly mother; the carpenter's shop at Nazareth; the ignominy of the cross? Can He be spoken to of His relations according to the flesh without giving offence? Can we, covered with the rags of our mortality and misery, present ourselves in His kingly court and announce ourselves as His brethren? And supposing we are not disdainfully expelled altogether, will our suppliant voices reach His ears? Are they not surrounded by, enfolded in, the sub-

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* St. Luke, vii. 13.

lime strains of which the Apocalypse speaks? and how easily is the cry of the beggar drowned in the blare of the trumpets that herald a monarch's presence! Amid the resounding songs of the Elect, are not our prayers like a discordant note thrown into the full burst of a melodious symphony? Will they not pass unheeded, like the wail of the beggar amid the joyous revelry of the guests of Dives?" Oh, how full of suggestiveness is the Divine saying, "*My* thoughts are not your thoughts!"* We reason wholly from a human standpoint, and such language is an insult to the Sacred Heart. The Son of God is not ashamed of a nature which He assumed out of pure love, nor of the miseries to which He voluntarily submitted. "He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*."† He will never be ashamed of any, as He Himself has declared, except those who have been ashamed of Him here, and refused to confess Him before men.‡

And, far from being ashamed of the human race of which He became a member through His mother, it is by means of this same human race that He designs to make known "the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."§ What a glorious achievement to make from this clay of ours cherubim and seraphim!

As to the song of the blessed, it drowns no supplicating voice, but rather *sustains* it, and aids it to reach the Mercy Seat, which is the Heart of Jesus. At the time He was about to return to His Father, Christ did not say, "I go to reap my victory, I go to receive the homage of the heavenly powers." No; "I go to prepare *a place for*

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* Isaias, lv. 8. † Heb. ii. 11. ‡ St. Mark, viii. 38.
§ Ephes. iii. 10.

you."* He would silence forever the chorus of heaven, rather than that the least of His own should raise a cry unheeded.

Certainly we cannot estimate His sensibility after our own mortal kind. The sight of evil no longer produces suffering. He trembles, sighs, and weeps no more. Who would wish Him still subject to the same dolorous compassion which constituted no small part of His earthly trial? But, although disengaged from the operation of the senses, His compassion is none the less real and available. Otherwise how could He say on the last day, when seated on the throne of judgment, "I was *hungry*, and you gave Me to eat; I was *thirsty*, and you gave Me to drink; I was a *stranger*, and you took Me in; *naked* and you covered Me; *sick* and you visited Me; *in prison*, and you came to Me."†

The Heart of Jesus is the most generous of all hearts.

Lacordaire remarks, "the sublime is the element of His intelligence." We might add that heroism is the element of His heart. Is Christ a *hero*, as we understand the term? He is more. He is Love personified. God is Love.‡ A hero is one "who by force of character makes his merits known," rising head and shoulders above his fellows, through some action requiring almost superhuman effort. But Christ "went about doing good,"§ sacrificed Himself, offered up His life as a holocaust, *without any effort*, as without any display. "Of His fulness we all have received,"‖ says St. John. As St. Francis de Sales so admirably remarks, "His

* St. John, xiv. 2. † St. Matt. xxv. 35 et seq.
‡ 1 John, iv. 8. § Acts, x. 38. ‖ St. John, i. 16.

work was as natural as when a mother soothes herself by nursing her infant."

The institution of the Holy Eucharist affords a beautiful example of this. Jesus was seated at table with His chosen ones for the last time. They had eaten the Paschal lamb. Then He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "Take ye and eat, this is My body." Then He took the cup, blessed it, and presented it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood." He commands them to renew this marvel day by day, until the end of time, in these words, "Do this for a commemoration of Me."* Then He passes to speak upon another topic. A man who was as generous as he was rich could not bestow upon a mendicant a piece of bread or the smallest coin with less ostentation.

The Heart of Jesus is the most indulgent of all hearts.

Jesus is our Creator. "He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are dust."† No one understands the human heart so well as He. Its violent disposition to evil, its weakness, its inconstancy in good, the many petty passions which we blush to think of, and which grace only can conquer,—all are known to Him. He knoweth that "all flesh is grass."‡ Hence He who pardoned not one sin in the angels, demands that we forgive man "seventy times seven,"§ that is, *always.*

They brought to Him a woman taken in adultery. The law of Moses required such to be stoned to death. The

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* St. Matt. xxvi. 26, 27; St. Mark, xiv. 22, 23; St. Luke, xxii. 19, 20

† Psalm, cii. 14. ‡ Isaias, xl. 6. § St. Matt. xviii. 22.

enemies of the Saviour stand around and press Him to decide what ought to be done. At first He keeps silence, perhaps to induce them to desist from their accusations. But, as they persist, He says, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone." They retire, convicted by their own consciences. "Woman," exclaims the all-merciful Judge, "where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither will *I* condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more."*

Another sinner, publicly known as such, comes to the festal board and bathes His sacred feet with her tears. His fellow-guests in their self-righteousness despise her, but He declares that He prefers her repentance to the disdainful conceit of the Pharisee.†

The Samaritans refuse to allow Him to pass through their town, actuated by profoundest bigotry. James and John, jealous for their Master's honor, wish to call down fire from heaven upon the offenders. He replies, "The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save."‡

They approach Jesusalem, that perfidious city, which had killed the prophets, and which in a few days is about to deliver Him also to the Romans to be crucified. At its sight, in place of overwhelming it with maledictions, He weeps, and cries out pathetically, "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes."§ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often

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* St. John, viii. 1 to 11.
† St. Luke, vii. 37 to 50.
‡ St. Luke, ix. 52 to 55.
§ St. Luke, xix. 41 to 45.

would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not."*

At Gethsemani, while His soul was wrought with agony, His disciples slept. He gently wakens them, and urges them to pray, well knowing the temptation hovering around and ready to assail them. After a second hour of agony and wrestling with a horror of black darkness, He returns to them, as if to recover somewhat from the fear He experienced. They slumber still, "for their eyes were heavy." In place of reproaching them sharply for their cowardly selfishness, He refrains even from waking them. He returns to the deep shadows of the grove to drain alone the bitter chalice. Then He returns again, and invites them to sleep on and take their rest.†

The traitor approaches to point Him out to His foes, by the infamous kiss. Jesus receives the false caress, and calls Judas "*Friend.*"‡ Peter wounds a soldier, Jesus heals him. Peter thrice denies his Master, Jesus punishes him with a look of tenderness.§ When the cross was uplifted between earth and heaven, in the very bitterness of that awful hour He cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"‖

The Heart of Jesus is the tenderest of all hearts

How beautiful and full of poesy are those scenes of the Gospel, where the Son of God, after a fatiguing day of travel, under a burning eastern sun, sits, as day de-

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* St. Matt. xxiii. 37.
† St. Matt. xxvi. 43 to 45.
‡ St. Matt. xxvi. 50.
§ St. Luke, xxii. 61.
‖ St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

clines, upon some stones by the wayside, and suddenly sees Himself surrounded by the eager Hebrew mothers anxiously bringing their children to Him for a blessing. His disciples want to send them away, but He graciously invites them, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." "And embracing them and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them."* Who does not recollect the Saviour's friendship for the youngest of the sons of Zebedee, and for the family at Bethany? What a thrill of satisfaction devout souls feel at hearing the virgin apostle glorify himself by the title, "The disciple that Jesus loved." Who has not envied him the place that he occupied at the Last Supper "on Jesus' breast"? Who would not have been in his place when Jesus said to His Mother, "Woman! behold thy Son!"

Christ's Love for us is a true friendship.†

Christ has done all He *possibly* could to bridge over the infinite distance which separated us from Him. He came down to our level, that He might raise us to that of His Heavenly Father. He does not *thrust* Himself upon us,—He stands at our heart's door and knocks, *a mendicant for love.*

Yet though we keep Him waiting long, if we love Him He promises to love us. Yea, not to quench the faintest spark of reviving love in our hearts, but fan it to a flame. He promises to come to us with His Father,‡ the sweetest guest of the soul, not to *sojourn*, but to *abide*,

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* St. Mark, x. 13 to 17. † St. John, xv. 14.

‡ St. John, xiv. 23.

and sup with us in the intimacy of friendship.* He washed the feet of His friends, and waited on them at table with His own sacred hands.†

There is a touchstone which tries all friendships. It is *misfortune*. False friends retire when misfortunes menace us. But the friendship of Jesus has been proof against the severest test. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."‡

This is what He did for us.

In short, LOVE is the guiding principle of all our Saviour's conduct toward us. Every act originates in LOVE, and is guided by LOVE. He asks only LOVE in return for all His benefactions. "My son, give Me thy heart."§ He is ready to obliterate the greatest crimes, if there be but love.

If we recall the heroic charity of saints and apostles, of such men as Francis of Assisi, Dominic, Francis Xavier, Francis of Sales, Vincent of Paul, and many more, we see how all-subduing is this principle of Love. It alone is able to lift up the soul to those serene heights to which our God Himself is moon and sun. And yet all these burning jets of love were but sparks caught from the conflagration (so to speak) which consumes the Heart of Jesus. It was by contemplating *that*, that they caught fire. Like the Prophet whose face became resplendent, because it had reflected the glory of Deity. It was in the heart, or, as he himself expresses, "the bowels of Jesus Christ" that St. Paul found that all-constraining

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* Apoc. iii. 20.
† St. John, xiii. 4 to 11.
‡ St. John. xv. 13.
§ Prov. xxiii. 26.

charity * which induced him to say, "Who is weak, and I am not weak, who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" †

In conclusion. The object of the devotion of the Sacred Heart is twofold: *First*, a *material* object. *Second*, a *formal* object.

The *material* object is our Lord's natural human heart. That sacred organ, wherein was formed that blood that flowed for us on Cavalry, and which day by day still flows mystically upon our altars. That Heart, whose every pulsation was employed in praying, in working, or in suffering for us.

The *formal* object of this devotion is *the love of Jesus for us*. *First*, His divine love, uncreated, with which He has loved us from everlasting as God. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

Second, His created love. His human love *as a man*, together with the other affections that filled His heart during thirty-three years, which caused that heart to throb so violently, to languish so often, and pressed it in the vise of agony till its last drop of blood was drained.

And, by uniting these two objects, we have Jesus, the only Son of God, and of the Virgin Mary, who loved us even unto death, considered in that part of His divine nature, which was the especial victim of love.

This is what the Heart of Jesus is, O pious soul! Say, is it not deserving of thy love?

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* 2 Cor. v. 14. † 2 Cor. xi. 293

Practice.

Consecrate yourself now and forever to the Sacred Heart.

The following lines convey the real meaning and import of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They are contained in a letter from the Blessed Margaret Mary to a friend :

"I tell you plainly, as a true friend in the adorable Heart of Jesus, that every time I entreat it for you this thought occurs to me. If you desire to live entirely for Him, and to reach the perfection which He wishes you to reach, you must make an unreserved sacrifice to His Sacred Heart of yourself, and of everything dependent upon you. To desire henceforth nothing but what He desires, to love only what He loves ; acting only by His inspirations and illumination ; never undertaking anything without first seeking His advice and help ; giving to Him all the glory in everything, and even thanking Him for *bad* results as well as good ; resting always humbly contented without troubling yourself about anything. For, if that Divine Heart is satisfied, loved, and glorified, we ought to seek nothing farther.

"And if you wish to be of the number of His friends, you must offer to Him this sacrifice of your own accord, upon the first Friday of the month after Holy Communion, which you will receive for this same intention ; consecrating yourself entirely to Him, to procure to Him all the love, honor, and glory in your power ; and all in the way in which He may Himself inspire you. After this, you must only regard yourself as belonging to, and dependent upon the adorable Heart of our Lord Jesus

Christ, have recourse to Him in every need, and dwell in Him as far as possible. He will replenish your soul, filling up that which was imperfect in your actions, and sanctify still more what was good, if you unite yourself to Him in all His plans which are so grand for you, whereby He designs to procure Himself much glory through your means, if you will but let Him." *

An Act of Consecration.

O adorable Heart of my Jesus! Source of all virtues, inexhaustible fountain of all graces! What didst Thou behold in me to induce Thee to love me to such excess, even while my heart, stained by a thousand sins, regarded Thee only with indifference? The startling proofs of Thy tender love for me, even when I did not love Thee, embolden me to hope that Thou wilt not disdain the tokens whereby I desire to attest my love for Thee.

Deign then to accept, O my loving Saviour, the desire that I have to consecrate myself to the honor and glory of Thy most Sacred Heart. Deign to accept the offering which I make of all I have and am. I consecrate to Thee my person and my life; my actions; my pains and sufferings; desiring henceforth to be devoted to Thy glory; at present *inspired* with, and one day hoping to be *consumed* by the sacred flames of Thy love.

I offer to Thee, O my Lord and my God, I offer to Thee my heart with all its affections. Behold me, O Lord, wholly devoted to Thy Sacred Heart! "How great are Thy mercies to me, O God!" O God of Maj-

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* From the *Messager du Cœur de Jesus*, a monthly Bulletin of the Apostolate of Prayer, under the direction of the Rev. Father Ramiere, S. J.

esty, what am I that I should dare to hope Thou wilt condescend to accept the offering of my heart?

It shall henceforth be kept for Thee, and creatures shall have no share in it.

Be from this time forth, O loving Jesus, my Father, my friend, my master, my all. I desire only to live for Thee. Receive, O Saviour of mankind, the oblation which the most ungrateful of creatures makes to Thy Sacred Heart, to repair the injuries which up to this moment he has not ceased to inflict upon Thee, in responding so ill to Thy love.

I give Thee little, but at least I give all that I have, all that I am able to give, and all that Thou desirest. Yes, I consecrate to Thee this heart, I give it up to Thee, never more to be withdrawn.

CHAPTER III.

The Bridegroom.

THE SON OF GOD CONSIDERED AS THE BRIDEGROOM OF HUMAN NATURE.—FIRST PROMISE OF MARRIAGE.—THE FIRST INTERVIEWS.—THE OLD ALLIANCE.—THE NEW ALLIANCE.—CHARACTERISTICS ACCORDING TO ISAIAS.

"In that day, saith the Lord, she shall call Me husband. . . . for I will betroth thee to Me forever. I will betroth thee to Me in justice, in judgment, and in kindness, and in mercies."—Osee, ii. 16, 19.

Jesus Christ often takes the name of *bridegroom* in Holy Scripture. He represents in the Gospel the kingdom of heaven as a great feast given by the Eternal Father to celebrate the nuptials of His Son,* to which all mankind are invited. St. John the Baptist calls himself "the friend of the bridegroom."†

As the disciples of this holy prophet were a little jealous of the Saviour's popularity, John, who had but in view the glory of his Divine Friend, thus replies to them: "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice. This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled."

St. Paul, exhorting husbands to love their wives, gives them as a pattern, the love of Jesus for His Church. He

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* St. Matt. xxii. 1 to 14.

† St. John, iii. 29.

recalls the words of Adam, when God presented to him the wife formed out of his own flesh. A man shall "leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh." Then he adds, "this is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church." * That is to say, the marriage of the faithful is a great Sacrament, because it is the symbol of the union of Christ with His Church. The Apocalypse and the entire New Testament are full of the same imagery, as we shall presently see. Evidently therein lies a mystery very dear to the Heart of Jesus. Let us try to lift a corner of the veil that screens it from profane eyes. Let us contemplate it by the Holy Spirit's aid, with a godly fear, with reverence and love.

Let us go back to the origin of things. Hardly had Adam fallen than the Son of God, touched by the misery of humanity, proposed to His Father to repair it, by uniting it to Himself in an *hypostatic* manner, that is to say, in unity of person. The Father consents, and the Word, hidden beneath a visible form, goes to seek our unhappy first parent, who had plunged into the recesses of the shades of Eden to conceal his nakedness, his shame, and the ravages which sin had made in him. "Adam," he cries, "where art thou?" He pronounces against him a sentence of death, and directly afterward consoles him by the promise of a Redeemer who should be born of a woman.† This Redeemer was the Son of God Himself, becoming in time Son of man. This woman was the blessed Virgin Mary.

Here, I venture to say, was a first promise of marriage made by the Divine Word to our fallen nature.

From this time forward the Word of God often ap-

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* Ephes. v. 32. † Genesis, iii. 15.

pears hidden under a human form, accustoming Himself, according to the happy idea of St. Augustine, to behave like a man. Thus, when God had resolved to annihilate Sodom and the four adjacent cities, Abraham beheld three travellers approaching him. He salutes them, introduces them into his tent, washes their feet, and prepares a repast. And *one* of them makes known to him the intention of the Almighty upon the infamous Pentapolis. And it is remarkable that in all the conversation which follows *one only* of these mysterious envoys speaks, and the sacred writer gives to him the name of *Dominus, the Lord.** This represents, in the Bible, the incommunicable Name, which the Jews bestow only upon God. Beside, Abraham also calls him Lord, and addresses Him as a God. We are therefore warranted in believing that this celestial envoy was the Word Himself, temporarily veiled in human form.

And when the parents of Samson asked his name of the Divine messenger who spoke to them, he replied, "Why asketh thou my name, *which* is *Wonderful?*" †

Now we know that Isaias predicted that the Messias should be called "*Wonderful.*" ‡

It was doubtless again the Son of God who came to predict to Manue the birth of Samson, one of his forerunners. For if this messenger had been an angel why should he have refused to tell his real name, when the holy archangels Gabriel and Raphael revealed theirs, one to Daniel, and the other to Tobias? §

Thus, in these cases, as much as in the mystery of the Redemption, the Word was sent of the Father. And Isaias gives Him, among other names, that of "Angel of the great council."

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* Genesis, xviii. † Judges, xiii, 17, 18. ‡ Isaias, ix. 6.
§ Daniel, viii. 16 ; Tobias xii. 15.

It is unnecessary to multiply these quotations, which carry us too far away from the subject. It may be added that this doctrine is that of several Fathers of the Church, notably of St. Chrysostom, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine.

These *Theophanies* or apparitions, wherein the Son of God temporarily assumed the human form, were the *first interviews* of the Word with our poor humanity.

Let us glance at a divine manifestation still more solemn,—I mean that which took place on Mount Sinai at the promulgation of the old Law. There is here something resembling an attempted espousal; there is, if I may say so, a marriage between the Word and the synagogue, that is, the Jewish church. But it is an *imperfect* marriage, for, according to St. Paul's observation, the wife remains a slave, and can beget only slaves, and so remains liable to divorce. This marriage, says St. Paul, had been prefigured by that of Abraham and Hagar.*

Let us explain.

The first and old alliance was contracted in the midst of circumstances rather calculated to inspire terror than love. Moses himself was affrighted. This people was not sufficiently ripe for the law of Love. Hardly was the alliance finished than this fickle people gave themselves up to idolatry, at the very foot of the mount whereon God conversed with Moses.† To punish and quell them, Moses was charged by God with a quantity of laws, precepts, and ceremonies, whose exact observance was almost an impossibility.

In one word, God treated the synagogue less as a wife than a *slave*. He promises it *temporal* benefits only—

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* Gal. v. 22 to 31.

† Exodus, xxxii. 1 et seq.

corn, and wine, and oil, and cattle—if it is loyal. He threatens it with famine, pestilence, war, and captivity if it is disloyal. Wearied with its crimes, or, as He calls them, *adulteries* (idolatry), He delivers them to the King of Babylon, who burns their temple and carries off all their youth into bondage. At the end of seventy years God restores them to their own land. But speedily He feels an aversion for the synagogue and its carnal rites. He informs the Jews that their mother is about to be dismissed by Him as Hagar was by Abraham. "What is this bill of the divorce of your mother, with which I have put her away? or who is my creditor, to whom I sold you? Behold you are sold for your iniquities, and for your wicked deeds have I put your mother away." *

But the real spouse of the Son of God, she with whom He contracts an eternal alliance, is the Christian Church, the beloved of His Sacred Heart and our mother. She is prefigured by Sara, the free wife of Abraham, whose children were also free.† She is prefigured by Mount Sion, as the synagogue had been by Mount Sinai, because it was at Sion or Jerusalem, upon the summit of Calvary, that the new alliance was consummated.

The prophets who had not the happiness of beholding this new bride, who could only salute her from afar off,‡ have nevertheless spoken of her in magnificent language. May I be permitted to cite a few quotations.

Isaias has predicted her admirable fecundity.

"Sion saith: The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she *should* forget, yet will *I* not forget *thee*.

* Isaias, l. 1. † Gal. iv. 26. ‡ Heb. xi. 13.

"Behold, I have graven thee in My hands: thy walls are always before My eyes.

"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see, all these are gathered together, they are come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt be clothed with all these as with an ornament, and as a bride thou shalt put them about thee.

"The children of thy barrenness shall say in thy ears: The place is too strait for me, make me room to dwell in.

"And thou shalt say in thy heart: Who hath begotten these? I was barren and a captive,—who hath brought up these? I was destitute and alone: and these, where were they?

"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will lift up My hand to the Gentiles, and will set up My standard to the peoples. And they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and carry thy daughters upon their shoulders.

"And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nurses: they shall worship thee with their face towards the earth, and they shall lick up the dust of thy feet."*

"Arise, arise, put on thy strength, O Sion, put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem; shake thyself from the dust, arise.

"My people shall know My name in that day" (that wonderful name which He had concealed from Manue): "for I myself that spoke" (under an assumed form), "behold I am here.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, and that preacheth peace, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy God shall reign."†

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* Isaias, xlix. 14 to 23.

† Isaias, lii. 1, 2, 6, 7.

To this picture of the glory of the bride is joined the well known and touching picture of the voluntary humiliation of the Bridegroom. Then turning again to the Church he exclaims:

"Give praise, O thou barren, that bearest not: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of the married wife" (the synagogue about to be repudiated).*

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light" (the Saviour) "is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

"For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising.

"Because thou wast forsaken and hated, I will make thee to be an everlasting excellence, a joy unto generation and generation." †

Isaias then sings the amiability and goodness of the Bridegroom, and this most magnificent chapter terminates with the following words from the bride:

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation. He hath covered me with the robe of justice and as a bride adorned with her jewels."‡

The prophet thus addresses the bride: "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

"Thou shalt no more be called *Forsaken;* but thou shalt be called, *My pleasure in her*, for the Lord hath been well pleased with thee." §

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* Isaias, liv. 1.
† Isaias, lx. 1, 2, 3, 15.
‡ Isaias, lxi. 10.
§ Isaias, lxii. 2, 4.

Suddenly he seems to behold the Bridegroom Himself approaching in His nuptial garments.

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? I that speak justice" (replies the Bridegroom) "and am a defender to save. Why then" (asks the prophet) "is Thy apparel red? and thy robes like theirs that tread in the winepress?

"I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with Me: I have trampled on them in My indignation, and their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My apparel." *

These enemies that the Bridegroom has trampled under foot are those of His bride. They are demons prefigured by the inhabitants of Edom and the town of Bosra, descendants of Esau. But the Bridegroom still tarries, and the impatient prophet exclaims:

"O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldst come down; the mountains would melt away at Thy presence.

"The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, O God, what things Thou hast prepared for them that wait for Thee." †

At last he beholds the Church united to her divine Lord, and again sings her marvellous fecundity and the happiness of her children:

"A voice of the people from the city. Before she was in labor she brought forth, before her time came to be delivered she brought forth a man-child. Who hath ever heard such a thing? Shall the earth bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be brought forth at once, because Sion hath been in labor, and hath brought forth

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* Isaias, lxiii. 1 to 4.

† Isaias, lxiv. 1, 4.

her children? Shall not I, that make others to bring forth children, Myself bring forth, saith the Lord?

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her. That you may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolations, that you may milk out, and flow with delights from the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord: I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you.

"As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you. You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb." *

Aspirations and Prayers.

O Word! O divine Lover! O tender Husband, how have mankind welcomed Thee?

Alas! The first heirs, the children of the kingdom, first destroyed the messengers that announced Thy approach, † and when Thou camest Thyself they received Thee not. ‡ What do I say? They cast Thee out of the vineyard which Thou hadst planted, they struck Thee and mocked Thee, and caused Thee to die among the vilest. §

But Thou didst come forth from Thy glorious tomb upon the third day, and didst say to Thy faithful messengers, "The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were bidden were not worthy." ‖

"Go then, scatter yourselves to the four winds of heaven! Say to every creature, My sacrifices are killed,

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* Isaias, lxvi. 6 to 15.
† St. Mark, xii. 2, 3; Acts, vii. 57.
‡ St. Mark, xii. 5; St. John i. 11.
§ St. Luke, xxiii. 32.
‖ St. Matt. xxii. 8.

My wine is already poured out: come, hasten to My banquet."

And the nations tremble at the sound of Thy Name: the kings of the earth combined to make war, and during long ages the executioner plunged his hand in the blood of Thy friends.

Nevertheless, Thy saints ended by triumphing over all the conspiracies of hell. Thy spouse twice baptized in Thy blood, O Lamb! and in her own, was long the admiration of the celestial powers.

But alas! these glorious days are now no more. Thy enemy, O Lord, has sown tares among the wheat;* adulterous children are commingled with Thine.†

They have nothing but aversion for Thy promised gifts, they prefer fleeting glory to that of Thy kingdom, and coarse enjoyment to Thy delights.

Thy light is odious to them, and they say to those who see, "Speak no more to us in the name of the Lord: neither He nor His Christ shall any longer reign over us."

They outrage the mother that bore them, they persecute her with their hatred, and would load with fetters her venerable hands.

O my God, where are Thy saints? The children of men have dimmed the torch of truth.

"Lord, save us, or we perish!" Save us, for already our bark trembles, already the bitter waves swell around us.‡

Say but a word, and there shall be a great calm. Command, and the unchained winds shall return to silence.

Ah, yes! Thou wilt save us. Thou hast determined it, O Jesus! We have sure guarantees.

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* St. Matt. xiii. 25. † Heb. xii. 8. ‡ St. Mark, iv. 38.

A new day is about to dawn, a day sevenfold brighter than the ancient days.*

Already the Morning Star, the Immaculate Star, shines resplendent from the midst of the storm, and restores hope.

The Sun of Thy Heart, O Jesus, rises upon the horizon! At its approach the phantoms of darkness fly, and return to their dreadful lairs.†

Under its happy auspices, the consecrated chiefs of peoples, the august ancients are congregated together.‡ They are assembled in Thy name, around the safe and incorruptible Guardian of the heavenly light, and Thou art in their midst.

In vain the impious rage ; in vain they conspire: Thy rod of iron shall crush them as a vessel of clay. Thou shalt reign over us, O divine Heart! by Thine own attractiveness, and by Thy beauty.§ Arm Thee with Thy sword, O Mighty One of Israel ! Draw forth from Thy quiver the sharpest of Thine arrows, pierce every rebellious heart.‖

Let a fire go before Thee and consume Thine enemies. Strike them, but only to heal them. Overthrow them, but only to open their eyes.

Clothe with Thy might those who announce Thy glad tidings ! May their voice, more stirring than a trumpet, resound to the confines of the universe.¶ Let the nations that still slumber in the shadow of death now awake, and walk in the light of Thy name, of Thy Heart, O Jesu.**

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* Isaias, xxx. 26.
† Psalm, ciii. 22.
‡ Psalm, xlvi. 9.
§ Psalm, xliv. 2.
‖ Psalm, xliv. 4, 6.
¶ Psalm, xlvii. 11, 12.
** Luke, i. 79.

Send forth Thy Spirit, that a new creation may appear; renew the face of the earth.*

Breathe it upon the nations of the dead, say to these bones, "Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!"† Live! Arise! Come forth from your dusty tombs!

And they shall live, and they shall know Thee. And they shall assemble in throngs, and come to throw themselves into the arms of the mother of all living, to sing with her Thy goodness, Thy love, O adorable Heart of Jesus!

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* Psalm, ciii. 30. † Ezechiel, xxxvii. 4 et seq.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bridegroom—(*Continued*).

THE ANNUNCIATION.—THE INCARNATION.—THE EPITHALAMIUM.—THE LABORS AND THE TENDERNESS OF THE BRIDEGROOM.—THE MARRIAGE FEAST.—ASPIRATIONS AND PRAYERS.

> I hear the voice of my Beloved. Behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills."—Canticle, ii. 8.

THE fulness of time at last has come. The Lover of humanity has heard its weepings, the sighs of patriarchs, the groans of prophets, and prepares Himself to come down from heaven. The Most Holy Trinity has held a council. The resolve is taken. The Angel of this great council, the divine Word, will descend to earth. The Son of God will become the Son of man.

But we have already remarked that the beloved bride ought to be free as Sara was. The great Prince who seeks her ought then to send an embassy to her, to solemnly ask her consent to a marriage with Him. So the archangel Gabriel, who in the ages past had already made the first overtures regarding this illustrious alliance, is about definitely to propose it to humanity, in the sacred person of a daughter of David, named Mary.*

What a difference between the preparations for this

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* St. Luke, i. 26, 27.

alliance entirely of love and that of the figurative alliance of Sinai! There were the lightnings and thunderings, the trumpet and the flame; menaces of death against whoever dared to approach the holy mount upon which God was about to descend. Here all is sweet, peaceful, happy. It is like a perfumed breeze from paradise, such as Elias heard in his cave when Jehovah passed by.* "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." †

These unheard of eulogiums alarm the humble virgin. The heavenly messenger reassures her, and makes known to her the wishes of the King of kings. "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS." ‡

At length we know the Bridegroom's name. It signifies SAVIOUR. Certainly it is a good omen for the betrothed. But she must further be informed of the quality of her future Bridegroom; what His nobility and rank is and whose Son He is. So the divine envoy continues: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father" (His father according to the flesh), "and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." §

A difficulty presents itself. The virgin is determined to preserve her virginity. How, then, can this thing take place? The angel informs her of the method whereby God will conciliate all things. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most

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* 3 Kings, xix. 12.
† St. Luke, i. 28.
‡ St. Luke, i. 30, 31.
§ St. Luke, i. 32, 33.

High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." *

At last the virgin gives her consent, in the name of humanity. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy word."

It is almost the same terms in which the wise and virtuous Abigail had accepted the alliance of David after the death of her first husband Nabal. †

And in that hour, forever memorable, was accomplished the grandest marvel that had ever been witnessed and which shall be witnessed throughout eternity,—a marvel of which we ought not to speak but on our knees, with tears in our eyes, our hearts throbbing with love, and gratitude, and joy. At that hour, nature was struck with astonishment. Angels beheld this mystery and could scarcely credit it. Hell, without understanding why, felt itself shaken even to its first foundations, and Satan trembled upon his throne of fire. The cold dust of Adam vibrated in the tomb. The lyres of the prophets awoke anew, and the harp of David found again its "concord of sweet sounds." ‡ "And the WORD was made flesh and dwelt among us." §

It was in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary that this alliance was concluded. *There* finally terminated the pure espousals of the Son of God with humanity.

I seem to see in this sanctuary, the most worthy of God that ever existed, the eternal Word offering His hand to our humiliated nature, and entertaining it with these sweet words: "Poor humanity, to what a state art thou reduced! Alas! On the day of thy creation,

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* St. Luke, i. 35.
† 1 Kings, xxv. 1 et seq.
‡ Psalm, cvii. 2 to 4.
§ St. John, i. 14.

I Myself praised the beauty of My handiwork.* The angels blessed Me.† Demons fled with envy. And now! I can hardly find any trace of My image which I placed upon thee. Thy foes have torn thy royal crown from thy brow. They have fettered thee, and trampled thee under foot. And the worst of them all reign within thine own bowels. Thou hast defiled and rent with thine own hands the resplendent robe with which I clothed thee. Divine Justice, to punish thy insensate pride, has covered thee with the skin of a wild beast, and in hunting thee out of paradise has crushed thee beneath the weight of its awful irony: 'Behold, Adam is become as one of us!'‡ Yet, in this sad condition, I love thee still! . . . Let thy foes tremble anew.§ I will make their envy more justifiable than ever. Come, come unto Me! Give Me thy hand! Before My Father, and before all the court of heaven, this day I take thee for My spouse. In order that fear and reverence may not predominate over love, the Bridegroom must be of the same rank as the bride.‖

"Well, I lay down for love of thee My glory and power. I clothe Myself with a robe of flesh like unto thine. Thou mayest exclaim in thy turn, 'Behold, God has become as one of us.'¶ The married henceforth shall be one flesh.** I will be thy head, thou shalt be My members,†† My blood shall flow through thy veins.

"'But,' thou sayest, 'those enormous debts due to divine Justice?' I will pay them. 'But that fatal note which I have signed, that agreement which I have

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* Gen. i. 31.
‡ Genesis, iii. 22.
‖ Ecclus. xiii.
** Gen. ii.
† Job, xxxviii. 7.
§ Psalm, cii. 15.
¶ Heb. ii.
†† Eph. v.

made with hell?' I will blot it out in My blood. 'But the old serpent?' I will crush him. 'But the foes which exist in my own bosom?' My Spirit shall dwell within thee to resist them.*

"I shall be faithful to all My duties as a husband even to the end. When thou hungerest, I will be thy sustenance. When thou art assailed, I will be thy shield.† When thou art orphaned, I will be to thee father and mother.‡ When thou art sick, I will be thy physician.§ When thou art weak, I will be thy support.‖ When thou art victorious, I will be thy reward.¶ And I shall count Myself amply compensated for all My sacrifices, if thou wilt profit by them, and love Me in return."**

But what did it cost the divine Bridegroom before He saw His bride free and triumphant, and beheld her accepted by His Father as a beloved daughter, and at length could press her to His heart! When Jacob sojourned with Laban, the latter said: "Because thou art my brother shalt thou serve me without wages? tell me what wages thou wilt have. And Jacob replied, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter."††

On the day of His incarnation, Jesus spoke likewise to His Father. "I will serve Thee thirty-three years upon condition that Thou recognize the Church as Thy daughter and My spouse."

To become the son-in-law of King Saul, David had to kill Goliath and subsequently two hundred Philistines.‡‡ To become the husband of the Church, Jesus had to

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* Rom. viii.
† Psalm, v.
‡ Psalm, xxvi.
§ Psalm, vi.
‖ Psalm, cxvii.
¶ Genesis, xv.
** Deut. x.
†† Gen. xxix. 15, 18.
‡‡ 1 Kings, xxvii., xxviii.

fetter the dragon, and conquer all the infernal legions.* To obtain Axa, the daughter of Caleb, Othoniel overthrew the walls of Cariath Sepher.† To deliver His bride, Jesus burst the gates of hell. Mark how ardently He undertakes this great enterprise. No mountain, or hill, or ravine, can retard His giant pace. Leaving the heights of heaven, He descends into the lowly valley of the virgin's womb. From that point, He scales the rude summit of Calvary, then goes down into hell, and finally remounts to the right hand of His Father.

What shall we say of the tenderness of Jesus for the beloved of His heart? He loves her wholly and entirely. *Una est columba mea*, "My dove is one." *Quam pulchra es*, "How fair art thou!" He is ravished with her loveliness. *Ostende mihi faciem tuam*, "Show Me thy face." He loves her, as St. Paul remarks, "as His own flesh."‡ He desires that His friends, that is, the angels, should participate in His admiration. "O thou that dwellest in the gardens, My companions hearken to thy voice, cause Me to hear it. Return, O beautiful Sulamitess,§ return, return, that we may look upon thee."

As to the marriage festival of the Lamb, it is in His own country that it will take place. God has made the preparations from all eternity. All that He has ever accomplished in the order of nature, and in the order of grace, has never had but this one aim. What then will be its magnificence!

St. John, an exile in the Isle of Patmos, beheld under sublime imagery the preparations for this nuptial feast. He heard a mighty voice, as of a trumpet, as of the everlasting sea, as of many thunders, exclaim: "Alle-

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* Col. ii.
† Judges, i. 12, 13.
‡ Eph. v.
§ Canticles, vi.

luia! Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath prepared herself. And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white." And the same voice added, "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

Then he beholds the Bridegroom Himself mounted upon a white horse, His eyes more brilliant than a flaming fire, His head wearing many crowns. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and is called THE WORD OF GOD. All the armies of heaven follow Him, mounted upon white horses, and clad in white and spotless linen.

Then St. John beholds a new heaven and a new earth. And at length the bride herself appears, descended from God, adorned as a betrothed, who precedes her Lover. An angel shows to the holy prophet the palace, or rather the heavenly city, where the nuptials are about to be celebrated. It is all resplendent with the light of God. It has a great high wall, with twelve gates, each guarded by an angel. This wall, which is of jasper, has twelve foundations formed of as many precious gems, and its twelve gates are twelve pearls. The streets of this city are of pure gold, and its sole light is the Lamb Himself. There is no more weeping; God Himself shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of His guests. There is no more death, there is no more mourning, no more crying, no more sorrow. The river of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb waters the city, and upon its banks grows the tree of life, that yields its fruit every month, and whose leaves bear healing to the nations. There are denied admittance all dogs, and

* Apoc. xix. 6 to 10.

sorcerers, and the unclean, and murderers, and idolators, and whosoever loveth a lie.*

Aspirations and Prayers.

O holy Church! O spouse of the Divine Lamb! O my mother, whether fighting here in exile, or triumphing in the heavenly country, thou art equally venerable and dear to me!

O bride of the Shepherd of shepherds, what thou teachest, that I believe; what thou promisest, for that I wait; that which thou lovest, I love.

O spouse of the God-Martyr, a martyr thyself, I grieve over thy sufferings, and I sigh for thy triumph.

Thy enemies say to me: "What is the purpose of this sad and austere life? Why comest thou not to share our festivities, to crown thyself with roses and sing with us?"

What! my mother weeps, and I rejoice! my mother is outraged, while I share the banquets of the sons of the impious Babylon!

If I forget thee, O holy Church, O beloved of my Saviour's Sacred Heart, let my right hand forget her cunning, yea, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if thou art not always the chief object of my love; if I cease to invoke upon thee the favor of thy Husband.

Lord, Thou hast sworn it, Thou hast said, "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." †

When the sun shall cease to rise to illumine the earth, and the moon shall cease to shine in the firmament, then shall I cease to love and protect my Church. ‡

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* Apocalypse, xxi. 8· xxii. 15. † St. Matt. xvi. 18.
‡ Jerem. xxi.

Thou hast said it, O Lord, yet each day we see Thy foes outrage our mother! They glory in the success of their vile conspiracies, each day their pride increases with their audacity, they cry with one accord "Let us abolish all the festival days of God."*

Tears have been our meat day and night, for daily they ask us, "Where is thy God?"† We are covered with confusion, and dare not lift up our eyes to heaven, and we lie down in our shame.

Arise, O Lord; why sleepest Thou still? Arise, and cease to reject our prayer. Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face, and forgettest our poverty and our misery?‡ If our iniquities have raised a barrier against the effusion of Thy mercies, remember, O Lord, Thy loving kindness of old, remember Thine alliance; cast Thine eyes upon that flesh wherewith Thou art clothed.

Are we not bone of Thy bone and flesh of Thy flesh? Does not Thy heart's blood course through our veins? Are we not the children of Thy spouse?

Cast now Thine eyes upon her, and behold! she covers her head like a widow, and weeps in silence.§

Arise, O Lord! It is upon Thee that our opprobrium falls. Arise, and judge Thine own cause.‖

Oh, we know that Thy mercies are infinite, Thy promises infallible.¶

This is why we wait with confidence, and amid the evils which overwhelm us we cease not to say, "Blessed be the Lord, Jesus Christ, with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, henceforth and forevermore. Amen."

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* Psalm, lxxiii. 8.
† Psalm, xli. 4.
‡ Psalm, xliii. 24.
§ Lam. i. 1.
‖ Psalm, lxxiii. 22.
¶ Lam. ii.

PRACTICE.

Make profession of a lively affection for the Holy Roman Catholic Church, of filial submission to her laws, of profound respect for the smallest details of her worship and ceremonial, in the belief that she sanctifies all that she touches. Impose upon yourself some pecuniary sacrifice to come to the aid of her visible head, the Sovereign Pontiff, in these evil days through which he is passing. Let no day pass without asking of God the Church's definite triumph.

CHAPTER V.

The Bridegroom.—(*Concluded*).

JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM OF EACH OF OUR SOULS.—COMPLAINTS OF THE BRIDEGROOM ABOUT HIS FAITHLESS SPOUSE.—AFFECTIONS.

"Return, O ye revolting children, saith the Lord: for I am your husband, . . . and I will bring you unto Sion."

"Return ye rebellious children, and I will heal your rebellions."

"We shall sleep in our confusion, and our shame shall cover us, because we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers from our youth even to this day: and we have not hearkened to the voice of the Lord our God."—Jeremias, iii. 14, 22, 25.

JESUS is not only the husband of the Church or of humanity in general, He has to assume that most loving title, which is an expression of all that is most tender in nature, with regard to each of the souls He has purchased. But if He has fulfilled His duties as a husband toward our souls, how unworthy, alas! are we to call ourselves by the august name of brides of the Sacred Heart!

Listen to the complaint which He addresses to us by the mouth of Ezechiel, and may we, moved by accents so full of tenderness, determine to give ourselves once for all, without reservation, and without turning back, to so devoted and loving a husband.

"Thy root and thy nativity is of the land of Chanaan; thy father was an Amorrhite, and thy mother a Cethite." Thou dost owe the day to a guilty race, a race condemned to perdition. Adam, thy father, prevaricated,

and revolted against Me in the very scene of delights, and Eve, thy mother, was the mother of sin. See, then, if you have any *claim* upon My love! Why, then, have I loved thee? Because of thy very misery—misery which touched Me, and pity begot love. Listen!

"In the day thou wast born, thy parents gave thee none of the care so indispensable to one newly born: thou wast not washed in water nor wrapped in linen; they turned from thee their cruel eyes, and cast thee out on the open way to perish, even on the day of thy birth."

What a striking picture of man born at enmity with God! There are few parents who would treat their children with such barbarity. But, respecting the soul, is it not true that they are cruel in spite of themselves? Do they not bring us into the world to die eternally? Since they cannot wash from us the stain of original sin which they have communicated to us with our existence, nor clothe us in the linen of righteousness, is it not literally true that they cast us upon the highway of eternity to perish?

"And passing by thee, I saw that thou wast trodden under foot in thine own blood; and I said to thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live! I have said to thee, Live in thy blood!" *

Here we have the story of our election to the faith and love divine. The soul is the plaything of Satan before Baptism. He tramples it under his feet with rage, exclaiming, *Incurvare ut transeamus*, "Lie down that I may pass over thee."† He covers it with wounds and drowns it in its own blood. And it can neither move, nor call for help. Besides, who would, who could, help it? It is then that the Good Samaritan passes

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* Ezechiel, xvi. 6. † Isaias, li. 23.

by, and, touched with pity at the sight, takes it in His arms, and says, "Thou shalt live!" He washes our wounds in the healthful bath,—He pours in oil and wine, and placing us in the hands of the host of the inn,—that is, the Church,—says: "Take charge of this unhappy one, and when I come again I will repay thee." *

And the host of the inn faithfully carries out the orders of the divine Traveller. But, alas! we soon return to the road to Jericho, and fall in with thieves who strip us of our raiment and inflict new wounds upon us.

"And I passed by thee, and saw thee naked and full of confusion, and I spread My garment over thee and covered thy shame; and I washed thee with water, and cleansed away thy blood from thee." †

At our birth we were naked, that is, deprived of righteousness. But our nakedness was not the result of personal transgressions. We had nothing of our own to blush for. But here our misery is of our own making, and we are only worthy of contempt. Will the Heart of Jesus contemn us? On the contrary, it is just then that He shows most love. He washes us anew in the waters of penance; closes again our frightful wounds, and covers us with the robe of righteousness, in order that before the holy angels we may have no cause to blush for ourselves.

But the soul thus purified and renewed will speedily incur new dangers. Furious at seeing his prey escape him, he who "was a murderer from the beginning ‡ will come with seven other murderers more wicked than himself." § It therefore needs a protector, a stay,—in short, a husband.

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* St. Luke, x. 35.
† Ezechiel, xvi. 7, 8, 9.
‡ St. John, viii. 44.
§ St. Luke, xi. 26.

Now who would have it for a bride? It is poor, and orphaned, abandoned by father and mother. Who will consent to love it, to give it his name, to take away its reproach?* Who except that generous Heart, which twice already has had pity?

"I swore to thee, and I entered into a covenant with thee," saith the Lord, "and thou becamest Mine. I anointed thee with oil. And I clothed thee with embroidery, and shod thee with violet-colored shoes: and I girded thee about with fine linen, and clothed thee with fine garments. I decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain about thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy forehead, and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. And thou wast adorned with gold, and silver, and wast clothed with fine linen, and embroidered work, and many colors: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil, and wast made exceeding beautiful: and wast advanced to be a queen. And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty, for thou wast perfect through My beauty, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."†

Let us try to explain briefly the details of the bride's apparel:

The robe indicates righteousness, a state of grace. It was with this that the prodigal son on his return was clothed by his father.‡ This is the garment without which none will be admitted to the marriage feast of the Lamb. It is that with which the Apocalyptic bride clothes herself to meet her husband.§ This robe is of rich and varied colors, because the state of grace does not consist merely in the absence of all stain, but

* Isaias, iv. 1.
† Ezechiel, xvi. 8 to 15.
‡ St. Luke, xv. 22.
§ Apoc. xix. 8.

also in the possession of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The sandal of celestial blue may signify innocence of life; of which it is written, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the law of the Lord."* The linen girdle is emblematic of the gift of chastity, without which it is impossible to see God.† The golden bracelets mark the charity which diffuses itself in good works. The necklace, fidelity; the ear-rings, obedience, for the Jewish slave, who by attachment to his master, renounced all prospect of freedom, had his ears pierced.‡ And, finally, the crown is the natural emblem of royalty,—and to serve God, a father of the Church has said, is to be a king.

And what is this bread of wheat flour commingled with honey and oil which is the nutriment of this happy wife? Evidently the eucharistic bread, the delicious fruit of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; of which it is written, "God nourished them with the finest wheat flour, and with honey out of the stony rock He satisfied them." And again, "His bread shall be fat and shall yield dainties to kings."§

Is it astonishing, then, that thus adorned with all heavenly gifts, nourished with the food of the most beautiful of the sons of men, the bride should become perfectly lovely and ravishing even in the eyes of angels?

And what have these gifts produced? Doubtless love and a loyalty beyond all test.

Alas! who would have believed it? All this has only begotten pride, and of pride are born contempt and infidelity.

"Full of confidence in thy beauty, thou hast abandoned

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* Psalm, cxviii. 1.
† Eph. v. 5.
‡ Exodus, xxi. 6.
§ Gen. xlix. 20.

Me; thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth when thou wast naked, covered with shame, and bathed in thy blood; and thou hast given thy heart to every one that passed by the way."

Is not this the place to exclaim with another Prophet, "Be astonished, O heavens, and ye gates thereof be very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have done two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."* Who hath ever heard of like things? Can a betrothed maiden forget the flowers which perfume her bosom? Thou didst say to Me on the day of our espousals: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, He shall abide between my breasts,"†—and thou hast forgotten Me days without number.‡

At this, doubtless the faithless one is confounded. It only remains for her to bow the head and listen to her doom.

This is what the Heart of Jesus pronounces: "It is commonly said, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and marry another man, shall he return to her any more? Shall not that woman be polluted and defiled?" Yet, thou who hast abandoned Me,—thou, who hast given thyself to the love of creatures which thou hast preferred to Me,—"nevertheless return to me, saith the Lord." Say to me only, Thou art my father, and the husband of my youth; cease to be irritated against me: say, I return unto thee, "and I will receive thee."§

Affections.

Unhappy me! What have I done? I have outraged

* Jerem. ii. 13.
† Canticles, i. 12.
‡ Jerem. ii. 32.
§ Jerem. iii. 1.

the best of fathers, the tenderest of friends, the most ardent of lovers!

Alas! whichever way I turn, I hear nothing but accusing voices. My own heart condemns me.* For if I had been snatched from death by a fellow-man, I should hardly know how to express my gratitude to him. If I saw him approaching in the distance, my heart would beat faster, I should cry out, "There he is, there he is!" I should run to him, throw myself into his arms, and kiss his hands.

What am I saying? Forgive, Lord, this idea. It is not to Thee, but to myself that it does dishonor. If at the point of perishing I had been dragged from the waters of a river by that faithful creature which by instinct attaches itself to man, surely I should love it, and could scarcely ever see it without caressing it.

And if I should forget myself so far as to raise a hand or a foot against it, there would be raised against me a cry of indignation. "Coward!" men would say; "he is unworthy of the life which this generous animal preserved."

I have been snatched by Thee from eternal death; from the abyss of fire and brimstone; I have eaten bread at Thy table, and I have dared,—alas! can I say it?—I have dared to raise my foot against my Redeemer!

Alas! alas! all things here below speak to me of the love and goodness of my God, and of my own crimes,—the air I breathe, the bread which sustains me, the fire which warms me, the animals which minister to me.

The ground complains that it is forced to bear me; the sun that it is forced to rise each morn to give me light. Day accuses me of having sullied its light, night,

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* 1 St. John, iii. 20.

its darkness. The herb which I tread under my foot exclaims, "Thus oughtest thou to be trodden down by fiends." The mountain echo, the murmuring waters, the low moaning of the winds among the oaks of the forest, are so many voices which reproach my ingratitude.

The air penetrating to my lungs; my heart in throbbing; the blood coursing through my veins,—all cry out, "Ingrate! Ingrate!" Even the silence of solitude is to me an accusing silence.

Where can I flee, or hide my shame? Shall I climb to the heavens? The angels at sight of me would exclaim: "Behold this wretch, this monster of ingratitude! God so loved him as almost to arouse our jealousy, if such were possible; for God has never forgiven anything to the angelic nature. If we had offended Him we should be with Satan and his companions in hell. This worm of the earth is conceived in corruption,* is born in the mire of sin,† and the Son of God annihilated Himself, and died for love of him, and in return, what has He received? Outrages and contempt!"

And I reply, "Oh, let me get down into hell. There, at least, I shall be among my equals. There I shall have neither witnesses against me, nor judges. Great God! even here they accuse me and curse me!"

A hundred thousand voices exclaim from the profundity of the abyss: "We offended God but once, and He has cast us out forever. He is just, and righteous are His judgments. But thou, infamous one, thou hast obtained His pardon a hundred times over, and yet still offend Him,—what hell art thou worthy to receive?"

Others, still more numerous, cry out to me: "We

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* 1 St. Peter, i. 23. † Psalm, l. 7.

have never known the true God. Ah, if like thee we had but known Jesus, and the ineffable tenderness of His heart! If we had been told of the most loving Mary, to-day we had been great saints."

I hear the antediluvian giants, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, and of Sodom and Gomorrha. What a frightful concert! If we had received but a single once the hundredth part of the grace which thou receivest every day, we had done penance in sack-cloth and ashes.*

The very demons remark to each other: "We are righteous compared to him; if we had had but the time to reconsider, or if, at least, God had given us a Redeemer, heaven would still behold us among the holy legions which Michael leads. But hardly had we sinned ere the Almighty blasted us. The breath of His wrath kindled the fire where we eternally expiate one rebellious thought. This wretch outrages every day the God who bought him! Dig, dig deeper into the abyss; hell is not deep enough to cover him!"

But, O God! even if I could escape the sight of creatures, where can I fly to escape Thy gaze? And yet, Lord, it is not that I fear the scourge of Thy Justice, because it offers me pardon. It is *this* which torments me.

Yes, I protest, I should be glad to see Thee avenged. But to hear Thee, the Eternal Beauty, ever ancient yet ever new, after I have so contemned Thee, still say, "Return, and I will receive thee,"—this breaks me down.

Thou desirest it then, O Jesus? Well, I return. Behold me! Receive me to Thine arms, to Thy Heart! There is no other refuge left to me. There at least I shall have no more censurers; there I shall be sheltered

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* St. Matt. xi. 21.

from the reproaches of the whole world. Open thyself, then, O Heart of my God! Receive me, purify me, keep me! Suffer me never to leave Thee again. Let me rather die than fall again into sin. Be to me my prison, my tomb! Amen.

PRACTICE.

Before making your examination of conscience in the evening, recall God's mercies to you, both general and particular, and especially those which you have received during the day about to close.

CHAPTER VI.

The Victim.

EXPLANATIONS OF THE TEXT, "I BEHELD THE LAMB WHICH WAS SLAIN FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD."—THE DIVINE PLAN.—JESUS THE FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE.—THE FALL OF ADAM.—THE WORD OFFERS HIMSELF TO LIFT ADAM UP AGAIN.—THE LAMB IN ONE SENSE WAS IMMOLATED FROM ETERNITY.—ASPIRATIONS.

"I beheld the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world."—Apoc. xiii. 8.

THERE is an expression in the sacred writings which at first sight may appear strange. The beloved apostle, whose eagle glance, more than that of any other, had penetrated into the secrets of the Divine Word in the bosom of His Father, *the theologian par excellence*, St. John, calls our Lord Jesus Christ, "The Lamb slain from the beginning of the world."

We have here two things to explain. First: Why was this title of *Lamb* given to the Saviour? Second: How can it be asserted that He was sacrificed from the beginning of the world?

I. The lamb clad in its snowy fleece is the natural symbol of purity. The saints in heaven wear white robes,* and the priest cannot ascend the altar without that linen robe which ever recalls to him the purity necessary to his august ministry. Now whoever was more pure than Jesus? As God, He is the reflection, the splendor of His Father's glory.† As man, He was

* Apoc. vii. 9. † Heb. i. 3.

born of a woman who had never been sullied either by the original taint, or the least fault or actual imperfection. And how was He born of Mary? In the same way as the dew which fell from heaven upon Gideon's fleece* was pressed out of it, without injury, and added to it a fresh degree of whiteness. So the God-man issued forth from the womb of David's daughter, without tarnishing it aught, but, on the contrary, increasing the splendor of her virginity. So St. Peter calls Him "*the immaculate Lamb.*"

Then, it is not for his *own* benefit that the lamb bears his wool. He gives it up to us, or rather we take it from him each spring, to cover ourselves, to clothe ourselves with his fleece. Does not this naturally make us think of that adorable saying of St. Paul, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ"? † For the Son of God became the Lamb, and clothed Himself with the spotless fleece of His humanity, in order to cover the shameful nakedness that we had inherited from the first Adam, in order that we might array ourselves in His purity and righteousness.

When Jacob wished to obtain by strategy the solemn blessing reserved for the elder son, he presented himself to his father in the perfumed raiment of Esau. And old Isaac, whom age had rendered blind, was really deceived by the agreeable odor of these borrowed garments, took him for Esau, and bestowed upon him the much-coveted blessing. ‡ Thus the Word of God desired that the Almighty (if I may dare say so), blinded by His easy kindness, and rejoicing in the sweet savor of Jesus Christ § with which we were invested, might bestow upon us the benison due alone to His eldest Son;

* Judges, vi. 37 to 40.
† Romans, xiii. 14.
‡ Genesis, xxvii. 27.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 15.

and that when we cry, "Abba, Pater," *my* Father, *my* Father,* He might reply, *My son!*

On the other hand, the gentleness of the lamb is proverbial. We say, "As gentle as a lamb." He permits himself to be shorn without a murmur. Against his numerous foes he has but one sole weapon, his plaintive bleating, uttered more to excite pity than terror. So we read in Isaias: "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearers, and He shall not open His mouth." † And in Jeremias: "I was as a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim." ‡ And in the following words St. Peter shows us the fulfilment of this prophecy in the sacred person of Jesus, "Who when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not; but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly; who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree, and by whose stripes you were healed." §

Now we understand why St. John calls Jesus *the Lamb;* why the holy Precursor, recognizing among the candidates for Baptism the Son of God, exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" why, in short, this sweet name is found so often written by the pens of the sacred writers.

II. The second part of our text, "slain from the beginning of the world," is doubtless more obscure. But in place of being discouraged at the outset, let us, like diligent bees, skim over the flowery fields of the Sacred Scriptures. Perhaps we shall discover some other traces of the same mystery. Let us seek from the prophetic harp some few chords that may aid us in discovering the entire harmony. For our text ought to be a

* Rom. viii. 15.
† Isaias, liii. 7.
‡ Jeremias, xi. 19.
§ 1 St. Peter, ii. 23, 24, 25.

stanza, or phrase, or at least an echo, far-off and weak, of some grand song of love, of some profound mystery of the adorable Heart of Jesus.

We see in the Apocalypse, that before the throne of the Eternal Majesty there is an altar, and upon this altar, a fire.* And this is no *new* altar. For, according to St. Paul, the tabernacle of Moses, the Ark of the Covenant, and everything found in the tabernacle, consequently the altar, were but copies of heavenly things.† Because God Himself in commissioning Moses to make all these sacred objects had said, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount."‡

Doubtless, O Christian soul, you are too spiritually-minded to raise this objection: "If there be in heaven an ark, a temple, an altar, they must be purely spiritual things, mystical, and possessing no *reality*." Certainly these objects are not made of stone or wood. But you know that spiritual and invisible things are more real than material things. Or rather, the former are the only true and enduring things, § in comparison with which the latter are but vain images, or rather shadows. ‖

But if there be in heaven an altar upon which the fire has burned since the dawn of creation, there must have been since the same period a victim to consume. And who is this victim? Since the incarnation and death of the Saviour, the thing does not seem difficult to understand. It is Himself, the Lamb who daily lies upon the mystic altar to be consumed in odor of sweetness and in an ineffable manner. Each day, the Church, prostrated before God with her eyes fixed upon the

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* Apoc. viii.
† Heb. ix. 23.
‡ Heb. viii. 5.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
‖ Heb. x.

Host of Salvation, thus addresses Him : "We beseech Thee, Almighty and Eternal God, command that these things may be carried by the hands of Thy holy angels, upon Thy sublime altar, in the presence of Thy Divine Majesty." But prior to the Incarnation, perhaps it was the legal victims, the goats and heifers, that the holy angel presented to the Divine Majesty? We shrink from the thought. And if so, what becomes of our text? Would Jesus then be "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world"?

Nevertheless, the difficulty lies precisely there. The Son of God is undoubtedly eternal, but He only became lamb and victim in becoming the Son of Mary. How, then, could a victim be sacrificed daily for four thousand years prior to his birth? To solve this difficulty, permit me, dear reader, to ascend to higher sources, even at the risk of straying from my subject. And there is nothing sweeter than to delve into these adorable mysteries, and, imitating the saints, to plunge into the great waters of Divine Love. And would it not be a little puerile to be tenacious about losing the thread of one's subject, when we are discoursing upon themes that are calculated to make us lose even ourselves?

God, who is infinite goodness, willed from all eternity to communicate Himself to divers kinds of beings, all differing from Himself. And as the most excellent mode of communicating one's self is by personal union, it was decreed in the councils of the Most Holy Trinity that the Word should thus unite Himself to a created nature. The divine choice fell upon humanity, of which one member, as St. Paul says, was predestined to be the Son of God,*—that is, to become united at

* Rom. i. 4.

the very moment of His conception to the person of the Eternal Word, in such a manner that this divine Person subsisted in two natures. That God was very man, and a man was very God. And as God is a God of order,* He subordinated all the other parts of His plan to this original design. All other men, along with the angels, were destined to form the court of the God-man.† This is why St. Paul calls our Lord "the first-born of every creature." ‡ Not only is He begotten of His Father as God "before the day-star," § before anything was made,—that is to say, *eternally*,—but He is, as Man-God, the first in the plan of the creation of the world, He is its keystone, and topmost stone.‖

Now, the angels in large numbers abandoned their posts, as St. Jude tells us; and, aware by revelation of the future abasement of the Word, they refused to adore Him in His humanity, according to the command of God.¶ Immediately, Divine Justice hollowed out for these rebels a bottomless abyss.** His wrath kindled inextinguishable fires. They were fettered with eternal gyves in the womb of night.††

To revenge himself, Satan enlisted the first man in his revolt. Man, therefore, was doomed to share the sufferings of him whose disobedience he had imitated. But could the eternal Lover of humanity,‡‡ the Word Divine, allow His betrothed to perish,—she whose choice had exposed Him to the disdain of the haughty spirits? His love, as tender then as it was after His incarnation,—His love, I say, could not permit it. He

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* 1 Cor. xiv.
† See St. Francis de Sales, "*Amour de Dieu.*"
‡ Col. i. 15.
§ Psalm, cix. 3.
‖ Col. i.
¶ Heb. i.
** St. Matt. xxv.
†† St. Jude.
‡‡ St. Irenæus.

offered Himself to the Divine Justice, to endure in Himself the penalty due to the sin of Adam, and to all future sins of mankind, when the time should arrive for His birth according to the flesh. The Divine Justice agreed to this exchange, and the Word immediately carried to our first parent the promise of a Saviour that was to be born. The decree for the sacrifice of the Lamb was therefore made "from the beginning of the world." Now, are we not accustomed to say that "the intention constitutes the action"? The will is to be taken for the deed. Jesus Christ Himself says that whoever finds complacency in an evil desire has already committed the crime in his heart.* St. Paul says the sinner crucifies for the second time the Son of God in his heart;† that he tramples Him under foot,‡ although he has but a *constructive* will to do so. Abraham, says the same apostle, sacrificed Isaac. § Now, we know that he only *intended* to sacrifice him. How much more reasonable, then, is it to say of God that, having from the foundation of the world determined irrevocably to sacrifice His Son, He did so sacrifice Him from that hour that the Son Himself, who had resolved to die for us, was already dead in intent, in heart?

Recollect, also, that the period of four thousand years which elapsed from the time of the promise made to Adam and its fulfilment is, in the eyes of the Eternal, but an inappreciable moment. "A thousand years with Him are but as one day," says St. Peter. ‖ With Him is no past nor future, but an immovable present, and of that which He has decreed to do it may be said that it is already done.

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* St. Matt. v. † Heb. vi. 6.
‡ Heb. x. 29. § Heb. xi. 17.
‖ 2 St. Peter, iii. 8.

Well, dear reader, is not our text completely verified? And have we not found some accents of that love-chant from which it is selected, and which we were seeking? And yet, we have not listened to the very first strophe of that song. It belongs not to time. It was intoned from all eternity by the Son of God, and heard only by the Eternal Father and the Holy Ghost. Yes, it is from all eternity; that is to say, since God is God, that the Word offered Himself to die for us; and that the Lamb consequently in the divine acceptance was sacrificed in the will of the three Persons of the adorable Trinity. In fact the secret acts of God, as we have remarked, are not subjected to time. They have had no beginning, and shall have no ending; they are as everlasting as God Himself. "I am Jehovah," He says; "I change not." Thus, as the Incarnation of the Word and the creation of the world were resolved upon from eternity; as the revolt of the angels and the sin of Adam were foreseen from eternity,—it was from eternity also that the Son of God said to His Father, "Here am I; send Me!" It was from eternity that He willed to suffer, from love of us, poverty, calumny, reproach, contempt, agony, blows, spittings, the lash, the thorns, the infamous death of the cross. Without this promised reparation on the part of His Word, doubtless God would not have adopted the actual plan of the world. Nothing could really counterbalance the outrages He was destined to receive from demons and from men. Now, the Lord has made all things for His glory. And it is not so much by the chastisement of sinners, as by the glorification of His elect, that He desires to procure to Himself this glory. This is why, as St. Paul says, God hath done all things for the elect's sake.*

* 1 Cor. iii.

But without the sacrifice of the Lamb, the elect could not have reached His glory.

All this is evidently contained in this text of the apostle St. Peter: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, foreknown indeed *before the foundation of the world*, but manifested in the last times for you."* Weigh well these words, "*was manifested*,"—shown forth. From eternity, He was a victim in will, in the divine acceptance. And when the time was come, He was shown to us;—such as He had always been. The Incarnation has changed nothing. It has added nothing to His disposition, to His love for us. It has only caused it to shine forth. "I have loved Thee with an everlasting love," He says to humanity, "therefore have I drawn thee" (by uniting thee to My Person), "taking pity on thee."†

Behold how "God so loved the world."‡ Behold how the Word of God hath loved us.§

Affections.

It is true, then, O Jesus, that Thou hast loved me for an entire eternity! The heavens and earth were not,—the light was unborn,—yet still Thou lovedst me! Thou hast loved me ever since Thou wast begotten of Thy Father in the bosom of eternal splendors. Thy love for me is as ancient as Thyself. And yet Thou knewest, O Infinite Wisdom, that which I was destined to cost Thee; sin was foreseen,—so also was the cross!

Thus does the young mother love her unborn child,

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* 1 Peter, i. 18, 19, 20.
† Jeremias, xxxi. 3.
‡ St. John, iii. 16.
§ St. John, xi; Hebrews, ii.

and dread of the sorrows and pangs of maternity in no way lessens her tenderness.

Meanwhile she carefully prepares the cradle, and the linen, which are necessary for the angel of her desire.

On the natal day there are no poor, for the shepherd's child is welcomed to the world with the same love as the child of a king.

It is a love inspired by Thee, and a touching image of Thine own love. It is thus, O Lord, that Thou lovedst me, that Thou carriedst me in the bowels of Thy loving kindness,—who one day wast to assume that Heart of flesh, the object of our devotions. And awaiting the hour of my nativity, Thou didst prepare for me all the marvels of this visible world, the true cradle of the man-child.*

Yes, it was for me Thou madest this fruitful earth; that Thou didst stretch out as a silken tent the azure firmament; that Thou didst sow the stars, and hollow out the abyss of ocean, and the beds of rivers; hiding the springs in the sides of mountains, and commanding the trees to bear all delicious fruits.

All these things were created before I was, because it was needful that all should be in readiness, when, like a king, I made my entry into the world. These powerful animals were made to serve me; these flowers to gladden my sight; these birds to enliven with their songs the banquet to which I was about to sit down.

Thy love anticipated all. Nothing was left to chance. Thy heart directed Thy hand. This is why all is so well done. This is why the smallest blade of grass, the tiniest insect, bears the same stamp of perfectness as the most magnificent sun.

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* St. Luke, i.

O Word, Creator! It was Thou who condemnedst Thyself to die; for Thou knewest that this beautiful work would hardly issue from Thy hands ere it would be defiled by man, and only Thou couldst purify it.

Thus, O Wisdom of the Father, whilst Thou didst lavish here below, as if in sport,* the tokens of Thy goodness, the cross was ever present to Thy view. Thy cross was the foundation of the universe.

Ah, I know it. I have learnt it of Thine own friends. Thou art LOVE itself.† This is the explanation of all that Thou hast done. This is the abyss before which my reason halts,—the bourn beyond which we must not seek to go.

Yes, I believe in the love which Thou hast for me.‡ But love lays claim to love. If the young mother endures willingly for her son pains and vigils and sacrifices, is it not because she says to herself, "I shall be repaid for all! I am sure he will love me!" And this hope is not often vain. But where, O Lord, is Thy recompense?§ How have I loved Thee?

Ah, here is the wonder of Thy love. When Thou didst love me after this sort, Thou knewest that I should despise Thee; that even when overwhelmed by Thy goodness, and purchased by Thy death, I should betray Thee still!

And this knowledge, O Divine Word, in no way retarded Thy loving transport. What do I say? This knowledge was to Thee as an impediment on the path of a racer—he stops only to bound on again more vigorously.

If I had never offended Thee, I should never have

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* Prov. viii.
‡ 1 St. John, iv.
† 1 St. John, iv.
§ Malachias, i.

known all the riches of Thy heart. It is this flinty heart of mine that strikes out the sparks of Thy love.

Shall I then remain in sin, in order that Thy grace may abound?* Ah, forbid it, O Jesus! It is time, ah! it is time that I commence to love Thee. I give Thee my heart. I give it Thee wholly. I give it Thee forever. I sacrifice for Thee all the objects which I have preferred to Thee up to this hour.

Ah, whatever I may do from henceforth, I shall be always Thy debtor. It will be always a fact that Thy love preceded mine for a whole eternity.

It will be always a fact that Thou didst love me, knowing well that I should offend Thee, and even when I had offended Thee. For it was Thy love, O Jesus, that drew me from the far-off wilds of sin.

I would then, like the laborer called to the vineyard at the eleventh hour,† endeavor to make up by my fervor for the time which I have spent without loving Thee. I would, like the "woman that was a sinner,"‡ love Thee in proportion as I have previously wronged Thee. I ask for the future but one sole grace: that I may love Thee for the remainder of my life, that I may love Thee eternally; that I may love Thee for Thyself, and that my love may each day be rewarded by a fresh degree of ardor. Amen.

Practice.

After the example of the saints, let us raise ourselves toward God, by means of visible creatures.

If we have ears to hear, each one of those creatures will say to us, *ecce quomodo amabat!*§ Oh, how He has

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* Rom. vi. 1.
† St. Matt. xx.
‡ St. Luke, vii. 37.
§ St. John, xi. 36.

loved thee! The smallest flower will say in its silent tongue: "I am but a witness, fragile and temporary, of the eternal and immutable tenderness of the Divine Word towards thee. But thou, how dost thou love Him? Yesterday, I was not. He commanded me to issue forth from the dust, to tell thee of His love. To-morrow I shall be no more. Woe to thee if thou hast shut thine ears to my voice!"

CHAPTER VII.

The Victim—(*Continued*).

GOD'S OBJECT IN THE CREATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD.—THE WORD PREFIGURING HIS SACRIFICE BEFORE THE INCARNATION BY MEANS OF TYPES. —THE DELUGE AND THE ARK.—THE DESERT SPRING.—MOSES UPON MOUNT RAPHIDIM.—THE SERPENT OF BRASS. —A PASSAGE FROM ZACHARIAS.

"All these things happened to them in figure."—Cor. x. 11.
"They foretold the coming of that Just One."—Acts, vii. 52.
"For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."—Romans, viii. 29.

It was by His Word that God acted ostensibly. It was by Him, says St. John, that "all things were made, and without Him was made nothing that was made." It is also through Him that God reveals His will and His attributes to His creatures. "No man," says St. John, "hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him." "I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father I have made known to you."* This is why the holy Gospel calls Him *the Word*, that is to say, the *utterance*, of the Father; and Isaias, *the angel of the Great Council*, that is, sent to reveal or execute the decrees determined upon in the council of the august Trinity

* St. John, xv. 15.

Now, the aim of the Word, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the creation, preservation, and government of the world, is, as I have already said, the glory of God in the happiness of the elect. This is the key to the entire history of the universe, and without it that history would be an enigma. To this end have tended and still tend all events of every kind, from the most important, such as the foundation, revolution, and fall of empires, down to the most insignificant which seem to us the result of mere chance. Thus in the divine plan, the world is but a theatre in which men and angels play a grand and unique drama. Its principal acts have been the Creation, the fall of the angels and of Adam, the Deluge, the career of the Hebrews, and the Incarnation of the Word. The last, for which we wait still and which will be the unravelling of the whole drama, will be the *manifestation*, or glorification of the children of God, at the general judgment. On that day the beauty and wisdom of the Providential plan will be displayed to all eyes. Then, and not till then, shall we understand all its incidents. Then we shall see that all the angels, all the demons, all men, righteous or wicked, have co-operated, whether knowingly and voluntarily or unawares and by compulsion, to this issue, after which, says St. Paul, "every creature groaneth," * *the entrance of the elect into glory.*

But in every drama there is some impediment,—an obstacle to the immediate accomplishment of the end in view. In the marvellous drama which we are contemplating, this impediment, which retards the glorification of the elect, has been *sin*. It was sin which compelled the Eternal Word to assume the part of Vic-

* Rom. viii. 22.

tim;—a part which He embraced with ineffable ardor, with invincible love. He liked it so well that He desired to carry it out as far as possible even prior to His Incarnation. And He did so in three different ways. First, by imprinting the stamp of His mercy—his cross—upon all His most startling works. Thus does an expert workman engrave his name upon the work which he executes at the command of his king. Secondly, by forming in the likeness of His humiliations and sufferings the righteous in all ages. Thus does a painter frequently portray himself in one or other of the personages that figure in his pictures. Finally, by prescribing to Moses a mass of ceremonies and forms, all possessing a deep mysterious significance, and which can only be explained as figures of the annihilation and sacrifice of the Lamb of God. Thus does a worldly legislator in dictating his laws point out the goal to which he wishes to lead the people for whose use they are destined.

Such is the grand theme which we essay to treat, always taking the sacred writings for our guide. By these we shall explain more and more clearly how the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. How His sacrifice, in one sense begun in eternity, was continued on through the ages, to be consummated upon Calvary, and renewed ever after, day by day, upon our altars until the end of time. How, in one word, this sacrifice has embraced and consecrated all the ages. And we may once again exclaim, "It was thus that the Son of God loved us!"

The first fact upon which we will fix our attention is *the Deluge.* At that time, says the Scripture, "all flesh had corrupted its ways;" and the iniquities of the sons of men had mounted so high, that "God re-

pented Him that He had made man on the earth."* He determined to destroy man with every living thing. He opened the cataracts of heaven and the reservoirs of the mighty deep. The waters inundated the earth, rising to the tops of the highest mountains. Behold here the work of justice, and, seemingly, of justice without mercy. Well, the Divine Word intends that this great chastisement shall become a type of His mercies, and these avenging waters the emblem of the waters of His grace. How? You see floating upon those shoreless waves that ark, a frail bark, the asylum and depository of the hopes of the world.† The ark of Noe represented the cross of Jesus Christ according to the Church, which in her Passion-tide hymn thus explains it:

> Thou alone wast counted worthy
> This world's ransom to sustain,
> That a shipwrecked race for ever
> Might a port of refuge gain,
> With the sacred blood anointed
> Of the Lamb for sinners slain. ‡

It was therefore a prophetic word uttered by the wise man, when he said of Noe's ark, "Blessed is the wood by which justice cometh."§ On his part St. Peter teaches that the Deluge was a type of Baptism; and to make the resemblance the more perfect, he informs us that, at His descent into Hades, our Lord found in purgatory the souls of many who by being plunged in the waters of the Deluge had obtained forgiveness of their sins.‖ The cross of Christ floated upon those floods in which the world was drowned. And as St.

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* Gen. vi.
† Wisdom, xiv.
‡ "*Vexilla Regis*"—Newman's version, *Lyra Apostolica.*
§ Wisdom, xiv. 7.
‖ 1 St. Peter, iii. 20.

James remarks, by this means "mercy exalteth itself above judgment."*

Let us touch upon the history of the Jewish people. Here, as St. John says, the Son of God is with "His own."† In this captive multitude in Egypt, He sees beforehand His brethren. And in the tribe of Juda especially He sees His ancestors, among others Aminadab and Nahason. Thus He wills to act more openly, and to afford them, under sublime figures, the tokens of His mercies and of His future humiliations. Doubtless the veil beneath which He conceals Himself is not yet to be torn aside. The full knowledge of the good which He destines for those who love Him ‡ is reserved for a nation still more fortunate, the Christian race. But this hiding veil becomes more and more transparent. The patriarchs were able at least to salute from afar § the Eternal Victim after whom they aspired. And, consoled by these promises, they could, like Jacob, rest in peace, awaiting the salvation of the Lord.‖

The God of Abraham heard the groanings of His oppressed people. He determined to rescue them from slavery, and to conduct them into the Promised Land. He appeared to Moses under the form of a fire, that burnt in a bush without consuming it. He commands him to convey to Pharao an order to liberate the children of Israel, and gives him a miraculous rod, by means of which Moses was to perform terrible prodigies to overcome the tyrant's resistance. After nine plagues, which only served to harden the proud heart of the monarch, the destroying angel is sent to slay all the

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* St. James, ii. 13. † St. John, i.
‡ Isaias, lxix. § Heb. xi. 13.
‖ Genesis, xlix.

first-born of Egypt. But it is necessary that the first-born of Israel should be spared. What can be more simple than to tell the angel only to strike the Egyptians? But it was not thus that it was accomplished. The Son of God, always preoccupied with the project of the death He purposes to endure for us, to save us from the sword of Divine Justice, wills that His own sacrifice should intervene, at least typically, on this important occasion. He bears the name of LAMB. He desires that the blood of a lamb shall shelter His own people from the stroke of this awful minister of wrath. He therefore orders each Jewish family to kill a lamb without blemish; to sprinkle its blood upon their doors, and to keep themselves shut up in the place thus sanctified. He commands them to eat the flesh of the victim with unleavened bread, and forbids them to break a bone thereof. Is not the veil which here conceals the truth very transparent? Listen to St. Paul: "Purge out the old leaven: for Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed."* Moses certainly understood the meaning of this touching allegory, since the Apostle says of him: "*By faith* he celebrated the Pasch."† As to the prohibition to break the bones of the victim, St. John has the following:

"Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated. And bowing His head, He gave up the ghost.

"Then the Jews (because it was the parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that was a great Sabbath-day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

"The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first and of the other, that was crucified with Him.

* 1 Cor. v. 7. † Heb. xi. 28.

"But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

"But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water.

"And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true, that you also may believe.

"*For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of Him.*

"And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they pierced." *

At length the Twelve Tribes, liberated from their chains, advance toward their native country. The Red Sea has swallowed up Pharao and his host, while at the same time it bestowed upon Israel a mystic baptism.† They march on, singing the praises of Him who had ransomed them,‡ and who still guides them in the pillar of fire and of cloud. On reaching the desert they lack water, and the people murmur, saying, "Who shall give us to drink?" Doubtless, with a single word, God could have opened a fountain. But even here it is needful that we discover Christ, the Victim,—the Lamb who was "wounded for our iniquities and bruised for our sins," §—who, shedding through His wounds the tide of life, would teach us to draw waters of joy out of the Saviour's fountain,—His Heart.‖ Moses repairs to the foot of a rock, and strikes it with the "*rod of God.*" The water flows forth, and the people quench their thirst. Is not this rock an emblem of the Heart of Jesus, opened by the soldier's lance to purify and refresh us? "Our fathers," says St. Paul, "were all under

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* St. John, xix. 30–37. † 1 Cor. x. ‡ Exodus, xv.
§ Isaias, liii. 4. ‖ Isaias, xii. 3.

the cloud and passed through the sea. And all drank the same spiritual drink: (and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.)"* The Saviour Himself alluded to this history when He cried with a loud voice in the Temple: "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."† It was this same water that He offered to the Samaritan woman. And St. John informs us that by this water He signified the Holy Spirit, which He designed to bestow upon His faithful ones, and whose effusion was to be one fruit of His death.

But lo! a powerful nation, the Amalecites, descendants of Esau, march to meet the chosen people to bar their entrance into the Promised Land. Moses ascends the top of a hill, holding in his hand the rod of God, and commences to pray for the aid of Heaven. He prays, but neither his prayer, nor the arms of heroic Josue, nor the sacred rod itself are sufficiently potent now. The Amalecites prefigure the enemies of the Church, the horde of the infernal powers. Their defeat is reserved to the cross of Jesus Christ. The representative of the Lamb must arise and lift up his arms, and become in a manner crucified. Thus, as long as he continues in this posture, Israel prevails. But when, from weariness, he is forced to let his arms fall, immediately Amalec has the upper hand. Doubtless, to obtain a complete victory it was necessary that there should be a complete resemblance between the prophet and the Lamb of Calvary. The Son of God had determined to die between two thieves condemned

* 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, 4. † St. John, vii. 37, 38.

to the same sufferings as Himself. It was necessary therefore, that upon the hill of Raphidim, as upon the hill of Calvary, there should be *three persons crucified.* Aaron and Hur cause Moses to sit upon a stone, while they place themselves beside him, and hold up his hands. All three remain thus—motionless, with hands uplifted, till the setting of the sun. God is touched at the aspect of this mystic group, and grants the solicited grace. Amalec is defeated, and the chosen people continue their onward march to "the land flowing with milk and honey."*

Some time after this victory, the Israelites, wearied with the journey and disgusted with the manna, murmur against Moses. God, to punish them, sends serpents among them, whose bite was like a burning fire. Moses, the worthy forerunner of Jesus, solicits pardon for these ingrates. But once again his prayer is insufficient. The Son of God wills that the guilty shall only be healed by His cross. The cross alone can close the wounds made by the dragons' teeth. This is why He commands the holy prophet to make a serpent of brass, and to hang it upon a pole, and every one that looked upon it was healed.† The Saviour Himself has explained the meaning of this figure. When Nicodemus came to seek Him in the night, among other things Jesus told him: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son."‡

You perceive, O devout soul, that the cross was as constantly present to the mind of the Son of God be-

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* Exodus, xvii. † Numbers, xxi. 8. ‡ St. John, iii. 14 to 16.

fore as after His Incarnation. What practical lesson can we deduce from this, except that the cross should be ever present to our hearts? Is it not most becoming that we should think of Him and of His death during the few transitory days that we spend upon this earth? He thought of us, and willed to die for us, from all eternity and during all succeeding ages. Devotion to the Saviour's passion has always been a distinctive mark of faithful and loving souls, as the admirable prophet, Zacharias, had predicted. I shall transcribe his beautiful words; see if you discern yourself amid the personages that make up the picture. "At that time, I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (children of the Church) "the spirit of grace and of prayers. They shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and shall grieve over Him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born. In that day there shall be a great lamentation in Jerusalem, and the land shall mourn: families and families apart: the families of the house of David apart, and their women apart. The families of the house of Nathan apart, and their women apart: the families of the house of Levi apart, and their women apart: the families of Semei apart, and their women apart. And all the rest of the families, and their women apart."*

Affections and Prayers.†

O only Son of God! after beholding Thee die for me, how can I think of aught but Thee! O Lord, my Sovereign Good, the most lovable of all good things, I love Thee far more than myself. I vow henceforth to love

* Zacharias, xii. 10 et seq. † Taken from the works of St. Alphonsus.

only Thee, to think ever of the love Thou hast manifested for me in dying for me in torments. O scourge! O thorns! O nails! O cross! O wounds! O agonies! O death of my Jesus! You compel me to love Him who has loved me so much. O Word Incarnate! O loving God! My soul is kindled with love for Thee. O my tender Master, I desire so to love Thee as to find no pleasure save in that which pleases Thee. Since Thou so desirest my love, I protest that I desire henceforth to live only for Thee. I am resolved to do whatever Thou demandest of me. Aid me, O my Jesus, for Thy goodness' sake! Grant that I may please Thee wholly and ever, in time and in eternity. O Mary, my mother, pray to Jesus for me, that He may bestow upon me His love; for my sole desire is to love Jesus in this life and in the next. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Victim—(*Continued*).

THE WORD, A VICTIM IN THE PERSON OF THE JUST.—THE PART PERFORMED BY THE JUST ON EARTH.—ISAAC.—JOSEPH.—DAVID.

"For there shall then be great tribulation. . . . And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened."—Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.

"And He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen, stood before Him in the breach."—Psalm, cv. 23.

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."—Rom. viii. 29.

We have remarked in the preceding chapter, that the Son of God, faithful to His character of victim, long prior to His Incarnation, was pleased to impress the seal of His mercies—the cross—upon all of His most striking works. We beheld the cross gleaming upon the waters of the Deluge; then in the land of Goshen; then following the Jews step by step through the desert. We assert now that it was with the same merciful intent that the Son of God formed the righteous after the likeness of His own future sufferings and humiliations.

We remark at the outset that the mission of the righteous here below is one of peace and reconciliation. "Noe," says the sage of Ecclesiasticus, "was made a reconciliation in the time of wrath."* God had par-

* Eccius. xliv.

doned Sodom and its four adjacent cities, if only ten righteous had been found therein. He did really spare Segor because of Lot, who took refuge there. Later on we behold Moses in a way compelling the Lord to pardon His people who had fallen into idolatry at the very foot of Sinai. Subsequently Phinees arrested the plague that desolated Israel. How often God declared by the mouth of His prophets that He spared the guilty Jerusalem "for the sake of David,"* dead centuries before! Frequently He is represented in the Scriptures as seeking for a few elect ones, whose good works might disarm His wrath, and complaining that He found none, that no one opposed himself as a wall against His anger.†

The just therefore are peace-makers. They bring man near to God. They stay the rigorous display of His unpitying anger toward sinners. But they could not fulfil this august ministry unless they shared in the dignity of Him who is our Supreme Advocate,‡ the only mediator between God and man, by whom we have access to the Father,§ the only Victim whose blood can appease the Eternal Justice. We are thus enabled to answer the grand question of all the ages, and which so much vexed the soul of the Psalmist. He had observed how "many are the afflictions of the just," while the wicked are frequently at the height of prosperity. This disposition of Providence became to him a source of temptation. After long reflection, he gave up all attempts to penetrate the secret, until he "went into the sanctuary of God."‖ More fortunate than he, we have learned from St. Paul

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* Isaias, xxxvii. 35.
† Ezechiel, xxii. 30.
‡ 1 St. John, ii.
§ Ephes. ii.
‖ Psalm, lxxii. 17.

that all those whom the Lord has elected, "He has also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren."* The righteous are the brethren of the Lamb. They must then possess some traits of resemblance in common. They are His members. Now when the head suffers, necessarily the members suffer with it. In short, they share in His ministry of reconciliation. They are the representatives, and are authorized to act for the Word made flesh. They must therefore wear His livery and carry credentials bearing His seal; that is, like the Lamb, the righteous must come forth from great tribulation,† and be clothed in blood-stained raiment,‡ able to present to the Divine Justice their good works stamped with the sign of the cross. Upon these conditions alone can they penetrate to the throne of the King of kings, and prevail upon Him to listen to their suppliant voices on behalf of their brethren.

What present could the Divine Word make to His friends comparable to His cross? He willed to embrace it along with our humanity, to which He was devoted from all eternity,—the cross which He was to carry thirty-three years in His heart ere He carried it upon His shoulders. To it He was to be fastened, and from its height He was to treat with His Father for the ransom of our souls, bestowing upon us His most beautiful precepts, as well as the most touching proofs of His love.

Moses understood, up to a certain point, the glory of humiliation and suffering, when he renounced the position of the adopted son of Pharao's daughter. "Esteem-

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* Rom. viii. 29. † Apoc. vii. 14. ‡ Apoc. xix. 13.

ing," as St. Paul says, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians."* And this sublime man is not the only one in the Old Testament who has thus prefigured and represented the Messias. But all those just ones whom St. Paul places before us, all those veteran warriors with brows crowned with immortal laurels, who are the witnesses and the arbiters of our conflict,—every one, I repeat, from Abel to the Machabees, have borne the cross and the insignia of the immolated Lamb. It was thus that they pleased God. It was by this that they became so mighty in word and deed. This is why their prayers were able to work wonders.†

This then was the mission of the Just in the Old Testament. Men continued incessantly to outrage their Creator, and the Divine Justice demanded the entire destruction of the guilty race. But the Son of God, the eternally betrothed of Human Nature, watched over them. Or rather, He watched over us, His beloved, whom He had predestinated before the world's creation to the incomparable glory of the divine adoption.‡ And in order to save those who were to be our progenitors, not being able to abase Himself, He sent before Him ambassadors commissioned to disarm the justice of His Father. And that their prayers might be heeded, He clothed them in the likeness of His future humiliations. He made them beforehand His members, and, in a manner, sacrificed Himself in them. St. Paul says, "God endured with much patience vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, that He might show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath prepared unto glory, even us whom

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* Heb., xi. 26. † Heb. xii. ‡ Ephes. i. 5.

also He hath called."* And the master in the Gospel prohibits his servants from uprooting the tares in the fields before the harvest, for fear of uprooting the grain with them. But again, what would have become of humanity from the earliest time, without the admirable design of the Son of God, whereby He commissioned these illustrious just men to become His representatives and appease the divine anger? Had there been found no Noe at the epoch of the Deluge, the race of Adam had perished. And we, who to-day are the objects of the affection of the Eternal Father, should never have been called into existence; though eternally conceived in the divine mind, we should never have been born. We see, then, that it was out of love for us that the holy men of old, Noe, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and all the prophets, were sent upon earth. It was for us that they labored and prayed. It was for us that they beheld the tide of life flow in bitterness and sorrow, for us that they bore the reproach of Christ. They sowed in tears, and we have reaped in joy the fruit of their labors.†

Let us pause a moment to study more carefully some of these divine men; we will begin with Isaac. The only and beloved son of Abraham, the Father of nations; the heir of the promises and benedictions, miraculously born in spite of the ordinary laws of nature,—He is one of the most illustrious types of Jesus Christ. On a certain night, God calls Abraham and tells him, "Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him up as a burnt-offering." Consider the circumstances of this famous sacrifice, and mark how carefully every detail is arranged in

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* Romans, ix. 22 to 24. † St. John, iv.

order to make it a copy by anticipation of that of the Saviour. Where shall the altar be reared? Shall it be at Hebron, where the patriarch lived? No. God reserves to Himself the designation of the place. Abraham arouses himself immediately, and thus gives us an example of *cheerful* obedience. He awakes his son, cuts the wood required to consume the victim, then loads the ass. Accompanied by Isaac and two servants, he goes forth to seek the terrible spot. After three days' journeying he perceives afar off Mount Moria, where Jesus, the true Isaac, was one day to be crucified. Was he suddenly illuminated from on high as he beheld that spot? Did he mentally view the awful scene that was to transpire there so many centuries later, the immolation of Him who also was to be his Son? All we know is that he at once stopped the servants and the ass, and taking the wood, laid it upon his son. Isaac, like Jesus, carries upon his shoulders the wood of his sacrifice. Abraham carries the fire and the knife, and the father and son, priest and victim, mount in silence the hill of Calvary, and mark out, if I may venture to say so, the rugged path of the Redeemer of the world.

In this memorable story God had but to command, or, rather, He acted directly, and by Himself. It was with His own hands that He stamped upon the forehead of Isaac the sign of the Lamb. More often it was the wicked whom he employed in this wondrous work. Let me explain. All the saints of the Old Testament, as well as those of the New, suffered unjust persecutions. But the Eternal Word knew so well how to manage events without doing violence to the free will of man, that while detesting the malice of persecutors, He employed it as a chisel to impart to His own the last traits re-

quired for a perfect resemblance to Himself. So gratified was He with this toil so worthy of Himself; so eager was He to offer to His Father sacrifices calculated to disarm Him; so eager was He to anticipate in His members His merciful character of victim!

Jesus' chief work of this kind was the holy patriarch Joseph, the son of Jacob and Rachel. The wise man has said of Him: "Joseph had not his equal upon earth." * And this is true. The equal of Joseph, or rather He of whom Joseph was a type, Jesus, was yet unborn. And it is perhaps this which makes the history of the son of Jacob so touching. Read in this light the story of Genesis, and if you really love your Saviour, your tears will flow over the sacred page, and while you bemoan Joseph, you will bemoan Jesus.

Joseph was beloved by his father more than all his brethren, and received as a token of his predilection a coat of many colors. Jesus heard the Eternal proclaim Him His well-beloved, and was clad in that splendid robe of grace of which the prophet says: "Who is this that cometh from Edom with dyed garments,—this beautiful One in His robe?" †

The preference of Jacob exposed Joseph to the jealousy of his brethren, jealousy which developed into hatred when he accuses them of crime. The love which the heavenly Father shows to His Son by communicating to Him miraculous powers,‡ excited the envy of the Jews, and this envy changed to rage when Jesus reproaches them with their vices and hypocrisies.

The son of Rachel having predicted to his brethren that a day would come when they should all prostrate themselves before him, they are resolved to ruin him.

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* Ecclus. xlix. † Isaias, lxiii. 1. ‡ St. John, vii.

Juda, one of their number, sells him to an Egyptian prince. The Son of Mary having predicted to the Jews that a day would come when they would be compelled to recognize Him as the Son of God, they swore to kill Him, and another Judas sells Him to them and they deliver Him to the Roman governor.

Joseph's coat was stained with the blood of a kid, which recalls the passage in the Apocalypse, "They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." And the same sacred Book says of the Saviour, "He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and His name is called the Word of God."*

Joseph still met with trials, even in Egypt. Putiphar, who loved him, who looked upon him as a friend of God, persecuted him through her weakness. And Pilate, while recognizing the innocence of Jesus, and while suspecting that He might really be a God,† caused Him to be scourged, and condemned Him to death also through cowardice.

Joseph was placed in the same category as a criminal, and to one of these criminals he predicted his future happiness, to the other his ignominious death. Jesus was numbered among the vilest, and predicted paradise to one of His fellow-sufferers, while He allowed the other to die in his impenitence.

Joseph quitted his dungeon to sit at the right hand of the king. The latter gave him his ring, accompanied by plenary power over all the land of Egypt, and ordered all his subjects to bow the knee before him. Jesus came forth from hell and the tomb to sit at the right hand of the King of kings. His Father gave Him

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*Apoc. xix. 13. †St. John, xix.

the nations as His heritage,* with sovereign power in heaven and earth.† He ordained that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth."‡

In short, Joseph was proclaimed *Saviour of the world* by the Egyptians, and Jesus by the Samaritans.§ Joseph, like Jesus, pardoned his brethren, and like Him caused their crime to turn out for their salvation and that of the human race.

Let us speak a few words about David. Despised by his brethren and persecuted by the great ones of the period, and subsequently by his own son; betrayed by his intimate friend who afterwards hanged himself as Judas did; crossing over the Cedron, weeping, and retiring to the Mount of Olives: there even insulted and cursed by a rebellious subject; prohibiting his followers from slaying the cowardly dastard; recommending to his generals to spare the life of his parricidal son,—this saintly king was such an exact type of the Victim-Lamb, that frequently while complaining to God of his own griefs he sketches out those of Christ.‖ Thus the Saviour said to His apostles after His resurrection, "All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me."¶ And does not the youthful shepherd represent the Victim of Calvary when he goes forth to encounter Goliath, with no weapons but his crook? Thus did the Shepherd of our souls go forth to defeat Satan, carrying His crook upon His shoulders. The pebbles also with which the son of

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* Psalm, ii.
† St. Matt. xxviii. 18.
‡ Phil. ii. 10.
§ St. John, iv.
‖ See Psalms liv. cviii., etc.
¶ St. Luke, xxiv. 44.

Jesse armed himself on this occasion do not seem to be less mystical. They were five in number, like the victorious wounds of the Saviour, and David had gathered them from the torrent. In Scripture a torrent is the emblem of tribulation and suffering.*

Affections and Prayers.†

O Lord, who hast loved me from all eternity, how very late I begin to love Thee! Grant that during my future life I may make up for lost time. I know beforehand that all I can do will be very little in comparison with the love that Thou hast had for me. But at least I will try to love Thee with all my heart. It would be too great an injury to Thee, if, after so many marks of Thy tenderness, I should divide my heart, and bestow a portion of it upon some other object. Henceforth I consecrate to Thee my whole life, my will, my freedom. Dispose of me as Thou wilt. I beg for paradise at thy hands in order that I may love Thee with my whole strength. I would love Thee very much here, that I may love Thee still more in eternity. Help me by Thy grace! I ask and hope for this through Thy merits alone.

Practice.

Rejoice in trials, since through these we enter into communication with our Lord Jesus Christ and with all the just ones of the Old and New Testament, as St. Peter tells us.‡

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* Psalms, cix. 7, and cxxiii. 5.

† Taken from the works of St. Alphonsus.

‡ 1 St. Peter, iv.

CHAPTER IX.

The Victim—(*Continued*).

THE SACRIFICE ON CALVARY PREFIGURED BY THE CEREMONIES OF THE OLD LAW.—SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE OF THE JEWISH SACRIFICES.—A PARABLE FROM THE GOSPELS.

The smell of *these sacrifices* ascended to the Lord, as a sweet incense.—Leviticus, *passim*.

"The Law having a shadow of the good things to come."—Hebrews, x. 1.

We have marked down as our *third* point, that the Son of God typified His sacrifice by means of the legal ceremonies which He had Himself prescribed to Moses.

The Law of Moses, according to St. Paul, was but a servant charged to conduct the Jews, the children of the Synagogue, to the school of Christ. *Pædagogus noster fuit in Christo*, "The Law was our pedagogue in Christ." * And, according to the same Apostle, the whole of this Law pointed to Christ.† As St. Augustine remarks, it bore Christ in its womb. It is therefore evident that the Law was but an exhibition of the eternal wisdom, although an exhibition full of love;‡ and that in dictating it to His servant, the Word had His gaze fixed upon His future abasement, upon His cross. I repeat, *upon His cross*. Because from the pre-

* Gal. iii. 24. † Rom. x. ‡ Prov. iii.

ceding quotations we may conclude that the coarse sacrifices of the Old Law, and especially that which the high-priest offered once a year before entering into the Holy of Holies, were types of the sacrifice of Calvary. Besides, this is the teaching of St. Paul.* Thus these victims, which had no inherent virtue in themselves, could not fail to be pleasing to God when offered up by holy persons having a lively faith in the Christ who was to come. They were like promises of satisfaction made by man in the name of the Word, who doubtless ratified them in heaven. This is why God so often repeats that the odor of these sacrifices is to Him "a sweet smelling incense."

Certainly the sacrifice which Noe offered after the Flood differed in nothing from those of the Synagogue. And the Holy Spirit, in speaking of it, employs these surprising terms: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and said: I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man; neither will I again destroy every living soul as I have done."† No one will suppose that the odor here spoken of was that of the flesh consumed upon the altar. Are we to understand by it the simple prayer of Noe? That holy patriarch had certainly procured the preservation of the human race in his person. But we cannot believe that his prayers alone would have sufficed to draw forth from God such an oath; and that, too, in favor of a world which, scarcely emerged from the waters of the Deluge, was about to plunge itself still deeper into those of iniquity, and inaugurate idolatry.

We have already remarked that the Flood was a figure of Baptism, and the Ark of the cross. Noe him-

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* Hebrews, *passim*. † Gen. viii. 21.

self was an admirable type of the second Adam. Like Him he was the sole chief of a new race of humanity purified by water. His sacrifice then was emblematic of that which the New Man was one day to make of His own body. It was, after a sense, the lamb that Noe had just sacrificed. It was the blood of the Lamb that had pleaded for mercy for man's past sins, and even for those of the future. It was the same blood which later on compelled the angel of death to spare the children of the Jews in Egypt, and to sheathe his sword and cease to smite Jerusalem when David had offered his sacrifice on the threshing-floor of Ornan.* It was that blood which like a beneficent dew descended mystically into the purgatorial flames when Judas Machabeus prayed and offered sacrifices for his brave companions who had died in the faith.†

In short, both before and since the advent of the Saviour, no sin has ever been remitted but in sight of the sacrifice of Calvary. When God pardons, He *transfers* the sin of man to the Lamb. "*God hath transferred thy sins,*" said Nathan to David.‡ So, the first time that John saw the Word made flesh, he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world!" Was not this virtually sacrificing the Divine Lamb, and was not the Eagle of the Apocalypse right in saying that he had been "slain from the beginning of the world"?

There is a passage in the gospels well calculated to explain the meaning of the sacrifices of the Old Law. Jesus Christ said one day to His disciples: "The kingdom of heaven" (that is, the kingdom of God upon

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* 1 Par. xxi. † 2 Mach. xii. ‡ 2 Kings, xii.

this earth) "is likened to a king who would take an account of his servants.

"And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents. And as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

"But the servant falling down besought him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt." *

Who is this debtor, if it be not Adam after his fall? He owes ten thousand talents, a prodigious sum, for mortal sin is of infinite malice. He is insolvent, for by himself man is unable to atone for a single sin. The creditor, that is, Divine Justice, orders him to be sold, with his wife and his posterity,—that is, delivered over to demons, that by an unending sentence he may pay his debt as far-as possible.

The debtor said to his lord, "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." What say you, Adam? Where will you find the sum to pay this immense debt? Do you expect some rich inheritance? Are you then of such noble descent? Hast thou forgotten that the dust was thy mother, that thou didst come forth from her womb naked, and that naked, alas! thou must return thither? For this part of thy sentence is unrevoked. "Yes," he replies, "I shall be rich one day. I do expect an inheritance, and of such a kind that after the full liquidation of my debt I shall still have abundance.† This inheritance I expect, not from my mother, but from my Son. One of my sons, O mystery! will be at the same time the

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* St. Matt. xviii. 23 to 27. † Psalm cxxix.; 2 Cor. viii.

Son of my Creditor, of my God, and to enrich me, He will impoverish Himself. He has just appeared to me and given me His word. I may therefore sleep in peace, awaiting the salvation of the Lord. For I shall die, but 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I shall enter the bosom of earth, but I shall come forth at the last day and 'in my flesh shall I see my God.'" *

This is the key to this parable. This is why the king had pity upon his servant. Never was any sin remitted without full satisfaction. "Without shedding of blood," says St. Paul, "there is no remission."† The Word had promised to Adam, consequently to the Divine Justice, to die upon the cross in expiation of the sins of men. Now the sacrifices of the Old Law, being figurative of that of Calvary, contained the emblematic renewal of this primordial promise. Before offering his solemn sacrifice for the sins of the people the high-priest had to confess those sins with his hands spread over the head of the victim. He loaded with those sins the innocent animal, which henceforth was regarded as guilty, and fell beneath the priestly knife. But the blood of goats and heifers could not efface human sin.‡ It was really, then, upon the Lamb of God that fell all the iniquity of the world. To recur again to the parable, each time that the expiatory sacrifice was offered, humanity seemed to say to God by the lips of the high-priest, "Have patience, grant me some respite; one day I will pay thee all." It might accurately say *I* will pay, because Jesus Christ was to become one of its members, or rather its head. And as He had once given His word He was understood to ratify and sign all His prom-

* Job, xix. 26. † Heb. ix. 22. ‡ Heb. x.

ises. They were so many sentences of death which He pronounced against Himself.

It is in this way that, ever since the fall of Adam, the Son of God has continuously applied Himself to appease the justice of His Father, either by causing holy men marked with His seal to precede Him, or by victims whose immolation was a type of His own death upon the cross.

But a day dawned at length when the Divine Justice grew wearied of these carnal sacrifices offered by sinners on behalf of other sinners.* A day when saints had become rarer and rarer,† and no prayer was any longer potent enough to turn aside the weight of God's avenging arm. It called upon the Word to fulfil His engagement, if He would not behold those whose guarantee He had become perish irremediably. Then it was that the Divine Word spake these words to His Father: "Holocausts and sacrifices offered for sin Thou wouldst not, neither hast pleasure therein. This is why I have said, Behold Me! I descend to fulfil Thy will, to sanctify man by the oblation of Myself." It was then that He became flesh and dwelt among us. Hardly was He conceived in the womb of His blessed Mother, when Divine Justice presented to Him the list of our debts, the schedule signed by Himself, in which were found inscribed, one by one, all the past and future sins of men. Jesus acknowledged this frightful debt, and undertook it, making it His own, and came forth to the world the spotless Lamb, but loaded with the iniquities of the human race. It was this accusing schedule which, according to St. Paul, He fastened beneath His feet on the cross, blotting it out with His

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* Heb. v. † Psalm xi. 2.

blood.* It was thus, dear reader, that the Lamb was "slain from the beginning of the world." See how the Son of God loved us, even before He became incarnate!

Affections.†

Thus, O my beloved Redeemer, Thy death was the sacrifice which Thou didst will to offer in order to procure for me the forgiveness of my sins. And what concern had it been to Thee if I had been lost, and punished as I deserved? Why wouldst Thou, O Eternal Word, endure the penalty of my sins? Why wouldst Thou, my divine Master, die to exempt me from death? O miracle which has never had, and never will have, its equal! O Love, which I can never, never comprehend!

And what can I render to Thee in gratitude, O Jesus? Thou hast so compelled me to love Thee that I should be most ungrateful if I did not love Thee with all my heart. Thou didst give for me Thy life divine. And I, miserable sinner that I am, I give Thee mine. Yes, I consecrate to Thee at least all that remains to me of life. I desire to employ it solely in loving, in obeying, and in pleasing Thee.

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* Col. ii. 14. † Taken from the works of St. Alphonsus.

CHAPTER X.

The Victim—(*Continued*).

THE MAN OF SORROWS. — HOW JESUS DIED. — WHY HE LONGED FOR THE HOUR OF HIS PASSION.—REPARATION. —AFFECTIONS.—ASSOCIATION FOR THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."—Gal. iii. 13.

"Him, that knew no sin, for us He hath made sin that we might be made the justice of God in Him."—2 Cor. v. 21.

We have shown in the first chapter of this work what the Heart of Jesus is, how He loves His Father and how He loved mankind. It was with a heart both big and sensitive that the Saviour came into this world. And why did He come? To do the will of God. And what was this will? That we might be sanctified.* By what means? By His sorrows. And this will He accomplished, from the first moment of His conception to His very last sigh. He made it His daily bread.† The first throb of His heart was a throb of pain. His life was but a long series of sorrows,—a perpetual agony. It was spent in groanings, for sin, the cause of His sorrow, was ever before His eyes.‡ He was called preeminently "the Man of sorrows." It was pain of the heart rather than bodily torment that caused His death.

* Heb. ii. † St. John, iv. ‡ Psalm, xxxvii.

Have you observed, dear reader, that when Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate to beg the body of his divine Master to bury it, Pilate, who well knew all that Jesus had suffered, refused at first to believe *that he was already dead*, and he was only convinced by the testimony of the centurion,* because crucified persons lived quite a time after being nailed to the gibbet. Saint Andrew lived two whole days upon his cross, and we know that they were compelled to break the legs of the two thieves to hasten their death, that they might be interred before the Sabbath.

Jesus Himself had said, "No man taketh My life away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself." † And at Gethsemani He said, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." That is to say, the sorrow which I suffer from the sins of the world is violent enough to deprive Me of life, if I permitted it (if I was not determined to suffer still more). From these several passages we may conclude that the God-man died of a broken heart. He died only when He allowed that sorrow which had oppressed and tortured His Heart during His whole life to complete its work, and snap the last thread of existence! This was exactly the kind of sacrifice which Divine Justice demanded,—a heart, the heart of a God, *contrite*, that is, broken, crushed, and humiliated by sorrow.‡ It is in this sense that the author of the "Imitation" has said that all the life of Christ was one cross and one martyrdom. The history of the Heart of Jesus may be summed up in two chapters: one of His love and the other of His sorrows. LOVE: SORROW: such is the Heart which God offers as a last refuge to our age so selfish, so covetous of pleasure. Such is the Heart

* St. Mark, xv. † St. John, x. 17, 18. ‡ Psalm, l.

with which St. Paul desired we might reclothe our own hearts.

But what I want to consider in this place is that Jesus had not even that sweet consolation which the innocent invariably enjoy in their souls in the very midst of suffering. However the just may be afflicted, if even they are condemned to an infamous death for imaginary crimes, there is always in the depths of the soul a sanctuary of untroubled calm, like a closed garden unruffled by any wind of misfortune. After he has sighed and wept, he looks within himself and says: "I have lost all,—goods, friends, reputation, honor; all, except one thing, the friendship of God; and surely this is enough. I can still walk with head erect, and whatever men may think, under the very executioner's axe I need not blush." And he sleeps quietly as Peter did, awaiting his doom, while his judges are a prey to insomnia. It is the beautiful privilege of virtue here below; it was the sole consolation of Job in his misery.

But with Jesus even this sanctuary of the heart was in a measure invaded by the bitter waters of our sins. "Save Me, O God," He cries, "for the waters are come in even unto My soul."* Doubtless He never forfeited His Father's friendship, and it would be blasphemous to doubt that He was at any time less dear to Him. But by a stupendous mystery our sins were imputed to Him, as if they had been His very own. This gentle Lamb was regarded by His Father as a great sinner, as even the sole author of all the iniquities of the world. "God made Him to be *sin*," says St. Paul, "in order that we sinners might become *righteousness* in His sight."

* Psalm, lxviii. 2.

Thus among other chastisements that Jesus had to endure, *shame* was not spared to Him. The Holiest of the holy was reduced to blush at Himself.

This is Bossuet's idea. But why speak of shame? There was still more. Jesus was accursed of His Father. You shudder, O Christian soul, and refuse to credit it. Believe then the Holy Ghost. Moses had said, "Every crucified person is accursed." And Saint Paul, writing to the Galatians, applies these words to the Saviour of the world: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made *a curse* for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."*

Imagine to yourselves the innumerable multitude of sins which became in a manner those of Jesus. Calculate, if you can, the crimes of that notorious race that perished in the Flood. Reckon the abominations of the Pagans, the infidelities of the Jews, and add to these all the sins yet to be committed, those of Christians as well as of heathens, beginning with the advent of our Saviour to the end of time. It would be easier to try to count the drops of water in the ocean, the grains of sand upon its shores, the leaves of the forest, or the atoms which make up the atmosphere. What evil thoughts! What criminal desires! What infamous actions! What rapine, violence, injustice, murders, impurities, atrocious wars! Well, God lays them all upon the innocent shoulders of His Son. All this burst at once upon that Heart barely formed in the womb of His Mother. And all this He bore up to His latest breath, for He is the Lamb that *beareth* the sins of the world.† It is like a mountain that overwhelms Him; like a bottomless abyss; a sea of bitterness, of sorrow, and shame, in which He is sub-

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* Gal. iii. 13.

† St. John, i.

merged! It is a kind of hell. For remark, that Jesus, being God, knew exactly the number, the diversity, and the gravity of all these sins, and, on the other hand, He knew the infinite goodness of God and the greatness of our obligations to Him.

"What shall I say now to Thee?" cries Bossuet. "What shall I say now to Thee, O Heart of the divine Jesus, overwhelmed with the infinity of our sins? Poor Heart! where hast Thou found room for all the sorrows that pierce Thee, for all the regrets with which Thou art torn? O Jesus, couldst thou dissolve entirely into water, Thou wouldst not have enough of tears to supply what so many crimes require."

Ah, now I comprehend that cry of my Saviour: "I have a baptism" (of blood) "wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."* Yes, doubtless it had been best for Him to have been at once fastened to the cross, rather than to be slowly devoured by the fire of Divine Justice during the thirty-three years of his life. But this is not the meaning of His remark. He does not desire so much the end of His sufferings as the destruction of the reign of sin. And this was to be the result of His death. This is why He calls it the hour of all His longings.

Jesus Christ foresaw and wept over the sins of all mankind, particularly those of Christians, and more particularly still, those of souls making profession of piety. Thus many a time He has thought over mine. He has known that at such a place, on such a day, at such an hour, I should despise the Infinite Beauty for the love of some creature; that I should break violently with my God rather than impose upon myself some

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* St. Luke, xii. 50.

privation, rather than displease some persons. The thought of my unfaithfulness was felt by Him infinitely more acutely than the gravest sins of the heathen. Who can doubt it? He Himself has told us by the mouth of David, "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated Me had spoken great things against Me, I would perhaps have hid Myself from him: but thou, My friend, My familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with Me!"* What can I do then to make reparation for my outrages, my perfidies? How close up the wounds which I have inflicted upon the Heart of my divine Friend?

This is not difficult. As we have said, the Sacred Heart is evermore consumed with a desire to destroy the reign of sin here below. Let us aid its painful labors, and He will soon forget all the evil which we ourselves have done.

You may perhaps say, "What am I, that I should cooperate in this great work? I can easily sin, but I have neither authority nor talents to exercise the functions of an apostle in the Church."

You are in error. Begin your apostleship with yourself. Uproot one by one all your bad habits. Resolutely make the sacrifice which God has so long demanded at your hands of this inclination or that imperfection, which you have always spared and caressed, despite the reproaches of your conscience. Give, in short, your heart to the Heart of Jesus, without restriction, without reserve, and faithfully respond to all He designs for you. What then will happen to you? The light of your sanctity, more splendid than the dawn, will awaken those who slumber in darkness and in the shadow of death, and guide their feet into the paths of peace.†

* Psalm, liv. 13 to 15.

† St. Luke, i.

You will become a luminous beacon, showing to the travellers wandering upon the sea of this world the way to port, and enabling them to escape the shoals concealed beneath the calm and treacherous waters. "It is impossible," says St. John Chrysostom, "that one virtuous soul should not do much good to many others."

Then *pray*. Your prayers will then be powerful. Jesus Christ revealed to the Blessed Henry Suso that whenever a soul wholly devoted to Himself solicits anything, it obtains it, even though all other men were combined to ask the contrary. Offer with the same intention, in the morning, and sometimes during the day, all your actions, even the most trivial. Deem it not necessary to perform some splendid act in order to soothe the Heart of Jesus. He receives everything gratefully, and pays less attention to the gift than to the love which prompts it. Recall the widow's mite. And then, in times of great suffering, the smallest relief seems precious. Have you not read in the holy Gospel the story of the wicked rich man in the depths of hell, imploring Abraham to send Lazarus to him with a drop of water at his finger's end?* Do you think that a glass of fresh water would have been an ordinary refreshment to the Saviour, when, on the point of expiring, He cried, "I thirst"? Would you have refused to offer it to Him under the pretext that it was unworthy of Him? Certainly, Jesus does not suffer now in Himself, but He does in His sick members, who are sinners. And the good we procure to them by our prayers is as acceptable to Him as if we had done it to Himself in the midst of His most cruel torments. Let us dread to expose ourselves, through our indifference, to hear at the great day of award that terrible reproach issue from our

* St. Luke, xvi.

divine Redeemer's lips: "I was thirsty" (for the salvation of men), "and ye gave Me not to drink."*

Affections.

O Heart of Jesus, martyred from the first moment of Thy existence, crucified even before Thy birth, I salute Thee! I adore Thee! I bless Thee! Forgive me, O holy Victim, that I have so tormented Thee! Oh, why was I born, if I am destined to be Thy executioner? Fortunately the evil is not without remedy. This day, at this very instant, I sacrifice to Thee *this passion*, *this attachment*, *this habit*, which has been a source of so much sorrow to Thee. I desire by Thy help to seize upon it, and dash it to pieces as the children of the infamous Babylon were treated. I desire to crush it beneath the rock upon which Thy cross was planted. *Destruatur corpus peccati*, "Let this body of sin be destroyed." Behold my heart, I give it up to Thee. Deign to dispose of it as Thou wilt. I accept beforehand all the crosses Thou shalt see fit to send me. I join them to Thine own, and through Thee I offer them to the Divine Justice, in reparation for my sins and for the conversion of my erring brethren.

O Mary! O Refuge of sinners, deign to present my offering to that Heart which is thine own blood, and obtain for me the grace to be faithful to my resolutions. Amen.

PRACTICE.

Enter into some association for the conversion of sinners. †

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* St. Matt. xxv.

† NOTE.—Beside the Apostolate of Prayer, under the direction of the Reverend Father Ramière of the Society of Jesus, the association explained in the following chapter is easy to spread, and its statutes have been approved by the Right Rev. Bishop of Tournai.

Association for the Conversion of Sinners.

"In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—1 St. John, iii. 16.

STATUTES.

I. Thirteen persons unite under the protection of the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and in honor of the apostles (*add the name of St. Paul to that of the other twelve*) to offer up their sufferings and certain prayers for the conversion of sinners.

II. The zealous person promoting the movement will take St. Paul for his patron, and the rest will choose by lot, and once for all, the names of the other apostles as patrons.

III. The members will then recite with their lips and in their hearts a form of consecration, whereby they offer to God, for the conversion of sinners, all that they may be called on to suffer. And those who feel courageous enough to offer themselves as victims, may, with the permission of their confessor, ask of God the grace to suffer according to their strength, to disarm His justice. (*See Form of Consecration.*)

IV. This offering they will renew, at least in their hearts, every morning, and upon the first Friday of every month they will renew it according to the form.

V. They will offer the holy Communion the first Friday or Sunday of each month for this intention.

VI. They are requested to perform every Friday some act of mortification and to recite such prayers as they may choose.

VII. Priests are recommended to offer up the Holy

Sacrifice for this intention the first Friday, or some other day of each month, as far as possible. They will be careful to intercede earnestly for sinners at the altar every day. Laymen will do the same at every Mass they may hear.

VIII. They will resolve never to complain of the dispositions of Providence. Thus, following the example of St. Francis of Sales, they will never say, It is too hot, or too cold, or the weather is bad, or this annoys me, etc. They will suffer uncomplainingly the petty contradictions of each day, and will only speak of those which are greater when there is sufficient reason.

IX. They will pray for each other, especially during the Holy Sacrifice. If one of their number dies, the rest will pray for him, and they will inform the President, that he may find some one to replace him.

X. None of these rules are binding in conscience. To be a member of this association it is simply necessary to make the consecration and offering of one's sufferings, doing the rest as far as possible. Moreover, this consecration can at any time be revoked; it is not a vow.

XI. The members are bound to spread abroad this devotion with a prudent zeal. They may procure thirteen copies of the rules for any person wishing to undertake the formation of a new association.

XII. The President will communicate the list of members to one of the association who will succeed him in case of death, and who will then take the name of Paul, leaving his former name to the new member.

Form of Consecration.

Eternal Father, behold me (*N*) humbly prostrated at the feet of Thy Divine Majesty, imploring Thee to accept the offering of my entire self which I now make to

Thee for the sake of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Desiring to honor Thee and to co-operate with Thee, as far as I am able, in the salvation of sinners, although I am the most miserable of them all, I offer to Thee all that I may be called upon to suffer from this time to the end of my life. I await with full and complete resignation all the crosses Thou shalt be pleased to send me, and I offer them in conjunction with the Sacred Heart and the precious blood of the divine Lamb, for the conversion of my erring brethren.

(*Members who feel courageous enough may, with the permission of their confessors, add the following:*)

I offer myself as a victim to Thy divine justice; and to disarm it in behalf of sinners, I pray Thee to grant me the signal grace to suffer as much as I am able, and by Thy help a portion of the temporal chastisements which they have merited.

Praised be Jesus Christ. Amen.

We willingly grant our approbation to the Association for the Conversion of Sinners, as also to the aforesaid statutes, and we earnestly hope it may spread in our diocese. And as a mark of our entire sympathy for this good work, we grant to all persons who shall belong to it, FORTY DAYS' INDULGENCE, *to be obtained upon their admission into the association and on pronouncing the Act of Consecration, and once a day on renewing the same.*

G. J., BISHOP OF TOURNAI.

TOURNAI, Nov. 19, 1864.

CHAPTER XI.

The Victim—(*Concluded*).

THE LAMB STILL A VICTIM.—THE HOLY MASS. AFFECTIONS.

"We have such a high-priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens. For every high-priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that he also should have something to offer."—Heb. viii. 1, 3.

Now that all is consummated and the sacrifice of the cross has fulfilled all the types of the Old Law and satisfied for all the sins of the world, how is it that the Lamb is still represented as dead* upon the heavenly altar at the foot of the throne of God?

Ah, it is here that the ineffable tenderness of the Heart of Jesus toward us poor sinners breaks forth. It was not enough for Him to be slain once. Raised to the right hand of His Father, bearing "a name which is above all names"† invested with His own glory, the glory of the only-begotten son of God,‡ He continues to care for our dearest interests with the most tender solicitude, and to immolate Himself for us, while we, alas! think only of despising His love and ruining ourselves. Each day the cry of our iniquities, as of old that of Sodom,§ rises up to God to provoke His wrath.

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* Apoc. v. † Phil. ii. ‡ St. John, i. § Gen. xviii.

The foul vapors of our crimes accumulate like clouds between us and heaven. Already the thunders of divine vengeance are muttering. Tremble, sinners, or rather, weep; but take courage!

The Lamb is still before the throne. Behold Him resuming His place as Victim, His office as suppliant. Full of more than maternal forethought, knowing our misery, well aware that after His death we should still sin on, He willed in the midst of His glory to preserve His wounds as pledges of reconciliation. Behold, He shows them to His Father. The Lamb who was dumb under the very knife of His slayer * is alarmed at the blow which threatens our impious heads. He can be silent no longer: He makes His plaintive sighs and prayers heard, the cry of His blood drowns the cry of our iniquities. The Father remembers that penetrating cry which the meek Victim uttered at His last gasp, commending to Him His soul. He feels His mercy moved, and out of love for a Son so obedient, so devoted, He overlooks our sins,† and pardons them. If, argues St. Paul, the blood of the just man Abel pleaded for vengeance after his death, shall the blood of the Righteous One plead for mercy in vain? ‡

What we have just said explains the seeming contradiction between St. Paul and St. John. The latter describes the Lamb as lying dead upon the altar; the former says, "He ever liveth" to plead for mercy as our Priest, for His priesthood is perpetual. He is always mystically dead, because He offers up Himself as Victim, being at once Priest and Victim. He is always living, as well as always dead, or *like to the dead:*

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* Isaias, liii. 7. † Micheas, vii. ‡ Heb. vii

such till the end of time is and shall be the part which Jesus Christ performs in heaven.

But what need have we to seek in the mysterious obscurities of the Apocalypse for that which is daily accomplished beneath our eyes? Is not the sacrifice of our altars properly called a sacrifice, and even the only one worthy of the name? For it is but the repetition of that of Calvary. Is not the Lamb in a state of humiliation and death? And does not the Church, which never prays in vain, ask of God to ordain that the Victim may be carried by His holy angel (that is, Jesus Himself) upon His altar on high?

What a ravishing sight to the inhabitants of heaven is this saving Victim offered every day in every place where the Church has her ministers! The sun, as he rises upon each hemisphere of our globe, gives to each region successively the signal of this stupendous miracle. And as he advances on his course he sees renewed through an entire zone that grand scene which he could not behold for the first time without veiling his splendors.* The perfume of this sacrifice, consumed by the Holy Spirit,† rises heavenward, carrying in its sacred eddies our vows and our prayers. At once legions of angels, attracted by this fragrant odor, descend from the Empyrean and press around our altars like a swarm of bees around a honey-comb. It is then that the vault of heaven resounds with the *Alleluia* of old. It is then that the sacred living creatures of the Apocalypse repeat their never-ending *Sanctus.*‡ Then the four-and-twenty ancients cast their crowns before the throne, crying, "Amen! Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor,

* St. Matt. xxvii. † Heb. ix. ‡ Apoc. iv.

and power, and strength to our God forever and ever."* Then the great innumerable multitude of the elect, clothed with white robes, and bearing palms in their hands, cry out "Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" It is then that the virgin souls, inseparable companions of the Lamb, tune their lyres, to sing that song of which they alone possess the secret, and which resounds before the throne of David like mighty thunderings and the sound of vast floods.† And rejoicing in this homage, the Eternal consents to forget the offences which we miserable worms have dared to heap upon His thrice holy name.

Thus, ever since the sacrifice of Calvary the earth has become an altar; or a censer, in which the sacred fire burns unceasingly, and which, swung in the midst of the embalmed regions of space, sanctifies one by one all the boundaries of the heavens. This is what the prophet Malachias predicted. When he reproached the priests of the Old Law with only offering defective sacrifices to God, he makes the Lord speak thus: "I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great *among the Gentiles*, and in every place there is offered to My name a clean offering."

Ah, we need not doubt a moment that but for this sacrifice foreseen from the foundation of the world, consummated in the fulness of time, and renewed each day on our altars, the human race had long since disappeared, and the earth, the theatre of so many crimes, would be but a heap of ruins calcined by the lightnings, —a sad monument of our impiety, a terrible trophy of the justice of God!

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* Apoc. vii. 12. † Apoc. xiv. 2.

Affections.

O Lamb of God, who didst bear the sins of the world, who shall tell us the compassion of Thy loving Heart!

Is it matter of astonishment, O Word, that Thou shouldst repent having made man,* since his crimes were about to be imputed to Thee?† Can we be astonished that Thy Heart was touched with a profound sorrow,‡ since the malediction adjudged to sinners was to fall upon Thee?§

The death sentence—death eternal and without remedy—was already pronounced; already the abyss yawned beneath our feet; already the dragon rejoiced at his fearful triumph.

"I will hurry them away," said he, "into the bottomless gulf; I will plunge them into living fires; I will bind them with chains of darkness; they shall share my torments: I shall listen to their enraged cries and I shall be satisfied. They will join their cries to mine, and to those of my faithful companions; and from the bosom of the abyss an unending concert of blasphemy shall rise to the heavens, and I shall be avenged!"

So thought Satan. But Thou, O Divine Word, wert touched by our misery. Although but dust and ashes, we were Thy workmanship, and Thy image, although obscured, still shone in us.

And Thou didst say to Thy Father, "O My Father, suspend Thy stroke. Man, alas! is so weak; he knows not what he does; see, instead of blushing at his revolt, he blushes at his nudity.

"Shall Thy goodness be conquered by the malice of the powers of darkness? Shall it be said that man has

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* Gen. vi.
† Isaias, liii.
‡ Gen. vi.
§ Gal. iv.

perished despite Thy eternal plans? More feeble than an angel, and so more liable to fall away, man is not settled in evil irremediably: I can still reinstate him, and love will operate upon him what fear could never do.

"I will become his surety. I will clothe Myself with his flesh. I will suffer the death which he has merited. I will teach him to serve Thee, to love Thee."

And the Father agreed to this astonishing substitution of the Just for the unjust, of the Son for the rebellious slaves; and from this time forth, O Lamb, Thou wast mystically immolated upon the altar of heaven, and Thy blood ceased not to flow.

And when that day came which had been marked out in the eternal decrees, Thou didst mount, meek Victim, upon the wood of sacrifice, and having exhausted the divine vengeance in Thine immaculate flesh, Thou didst cry with a loud voice, "All is consummated!"

"All is consummated!" The mystery of justice, O Host, was consummated, but that of Thy love was only about to commence.

Thou didst but ascend into heaven to intercede for us, to pray for us, and still to sacrifice Thyself. The eagle of Patmos beheld Thee upon the altar at the foot of the throne, where Thou shalt be till the dawn of eternity.

Does not St. Paul, instructed by Thyself, teach us that the table whereat we eat the heavenly bread and drink the cup of the Lord is an altar?* Hast Thou not said it Thyself, O true Melchisedech? Holding in Thy hands the blood of the New Covenant, Thou saidst: "Do this in commemoration of Me!"

Truly there are no more nails, nor thorns, nor lance;

* Heb. xiii.

but is not Thy saying, O Word, a sword, and is not the Holy Ghost as a fire?

O Victim! O Lamb! O Priest! O Love! why cannot I respond to Thy love? Why cannot I sacrifice myself with Thee?

Even as Thou didst say to Thy Father, so would I say to Thee, Behold me. Behold my heart! May the sword that proceedeth out of Thy mouth pierce it through and through! May Thy Holy Spirit consume it!

And may the odor of my sacrifice be mingled with the perfume of Thine, that it may ascend to heaven as a sweet savor. Amen.

Practice.

To assist at the Sacrifice of the Mass as often as possible. To unite your intention to that of our Lord, and to offer to the Eternal Father all the Masses that have ever been celebrated, that are actually being celebrated, and tha shall be celebrated till the end of time, for the glory of the undivided Trinity and the salvation of the human race.

CHAPTER XII.

The Love of Loves.

THE EUCHARIST.—CONFLICT IN THE HEART OF JESUS.—LOVE TRIUMPHS.—PRAYER OF JESUS TO HIS FATHER.—THE FATHER CONSENTS.—JESUS' THANKSGIVING.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die."—St. John, vi. 49, 50.

JESUS had just fed the multitude with a few loaves of bread. The people, full of enthusiasm, wished to carry Him off and make Him king; but He escaped from them and ordered His disciples to embark on the waters of Genesareth. Then He retired to a mountain to pray, and to commune with His Father respecting an object very dear to His heart, the most astonishing invention of His love.

The miracle which He had just performed was sufficient to make known to men of good-will* that this was the Prophet whom the world expected, the Redeemer promised to the Patriarchs. But this was very little to Him. The Son cannot remain, in regard to His benefits, less than the servant. Moses had fed his people for forty years with a bread which his prayers caused to come down from heaven. Jesus would give to His people, not during forty years, but until the end of time, a truly celestial bread, a living bread that gives eternal life; a bread containing in itself all sweetness,

* St. Luke, ii.

and which shall be an abridgment of all His miracles, the imperishable memorial of His love.* What is this bread to be, which is more admirable, more delicious, and more life-giving than the manna of the wilderness?

Love tends to union. And Jesus loves mankind, His brethren, with a boundless love, a love which He had drawn from the bosom of His Father. To satisfy this love He found a way to unite Himself with men in the most intimate manner that it is possible to conceive. Concealed beneath the appearance of ordinary food, He wills to give Himself to them. He wills that His flesh shall become their daily food, and His blood their drink, in order to penetrate them wholly, to insinuate Himself into the most secret depths of their being, and thus sanctify at the same time their souls and their bodies. By this means He will deposit in them a germ of immortality, of divinity. They will henceforth be but one body of which He will be the head, and which His Spirit will animate. He will dwell in them as His Father dwells in Him. They will live by Him as He lives by His Father.

This project is surrounded with immense difficulties. To carry it out, all the laws of Nature must be set aside. The sacred humanity of the Son of God will require to be in a hundred thousand places at once. It will need to repeat itself, to annihilate itself, to hide itself; without inherent extension to be under extended species; incorruptible under corruptible species; renouncing its natural shape to subsist under forms alien to itself which may be broken without in any way dividing Him. It will be necessary, in short, that, without quitting the heavens where He sitteth in the glory of the Father, He should be suddenly found, at the word of His min-

* Psalm, cx.; St. Luke, xxii.; 1 Cor. xi.

isters, under the form of bread and wine, whose substance shall become changed into His own without their outward semblance ceasing to exist.

The miracle of the Eucharist involves the display of a power greater than that required to create a world. Jesus is aware of it, but all these difficulties can no more stand in the way of His love than a handful of straw before a vast fire. They will only cause His love for souls to shine forth all the brighter. Is it not written that in order to join Himself to His Church He leapeth over the mountains and the hills?

The Evangelists tell us nothing of what passed in the Heart of Jesus upon this occasion. They simply tell us that upon the vigil of the day whereon He was to reveal to the world this astonishing mystery, the Saviour continued in prayer until the fourth watch of the night.* Shall we be guilty of too much temerity, dear reader, if we attempt to divine somewhat? Is it not allowable to suppose that there, as in Gethsemani, there was a struggle between His love and His horror at the ingratitude and innumerable offences to which this same love was about to expose Him? There are numbers of men who will refuse to believe in His excessive love. Obstinate Jews, heathens, and, later on, heretics, will see but ordinary bread in this mystic bread, which will become the object of the grossest outrages at their hands. The sacrament of love will be thrown into the mire, trampled under foot, given to the flames; and is all this worthy of a God? "All this," replies the divine Heart, "affects Me but little, and I will willingly submit to it for the sake of those who believe."

But speedily sadder and more doleful images assail the soul of the God-man. The faithful for whose sake

* St. Mark, vi. 48.

He is willing to bear with so many affronts will cause Him to suffer the most outrageous indignities. Every year He will see them, by hundreds and thousands, approach Him with souls defiled by mortal sin; receiving Him, to keep up a habit, or for even worse reasons still, and, in a manner, deliver Him to Satan, the lord of their hearts!

Doubtless at such a thought Jesus shuddered. He felt His gentle Heart seized with a profound sadness, and His blood freeze in His veins. A cold sweat bedewed His brow, and He hid His face with His trembling hands, remaining a long time as if undecided and hesitant. But souls, *our* souls, were there before His eyes. Their salvation, their happiness, demanded this sacrifice, and His love pleaded their cause. It is done. Love triumphs over the horror inspired by the anticipated spectacle of so much irreverence, of so many perfidies, of so many profanations. The bitter waters of our ingratitude cannot quench the flames of His love. The solemn *fiat* goes forth once more from His generous Heart. The only thing wanting to our happiness is the consent of the Eternal Father. But the Father, having already given us His Son, how can He refuse a favor solicited by One so dear?*

Jesus prostrates Himself, according to His wont, and addresses to Him His prayer.

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me always. Thou knowest My desire at this moment, and, oh! I entreat Thee in the name of souls, and in My own name, oppose it not! Doubtless My Sacrament will become the occasion of many sins. But was not the light Thy handiwork, and how many ingrates abuse it to offend Thee? Still, morn by morn, Thou givest it to the world

* Rom. viii. 34.

again, causing Thy sun to shine upon the good and upon the wicked. O My Father, I am the light of spirits, My Heart is the Sun of souls! Goodness should communicate itself, only to be measured by the capacity of those who receive. Their ingratitude might well stop its effusion, but only as a sand-bank which serves but to accumulate the waters of a flood. It soon gives way, and the flood, swollen by the fragile obstacle, overturns it, swallows it up, and inundates all the surrounding fields. Is it not thus, My Father, that Thou hast always dealt with men?"

And the Eternal Father doubtless replied: "O My Son, great is Thy love! Well, I consent. Love Thy brethren above measure,* and may the love of a few console Thee for the coldness and contempt of the rest."

The Heart of Jesus had reached the summit of its wishes, and I seem to hear Him expressing His gratitude and His joy in some such terms as these:

"What can I render to Thee, O holy Father, for the favor Thou hast now vouchsafed,—shall I say to the sons of Adam, or to Myself? To the sons of Adam, to whom Thou hast now given the most striking proof of Thy love. But also to Me, since Thou permittest Me this day to make known to them the whole extent of My love. To the sons of Adam, because Thou hast just consummated their adoption, their union with Thee and Me. And to Me also, because Thou givest Me in them brethren who, purified in the springs of My Heart, drinking of the waters of Thy divinity, will become worthy of Thee and of Me. O My Father, this is the greatest day of My mortal life; My heart overflows with joy.

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* St. John, xiii.

"I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, O My Father: in the midst of the Church will I praise Thee.

"All ye that fear the Lord, praise Him. Ye seed of Jacob, glorify His name, because He hath heard My petition.

"The poor shall eat and be filled, and they shall praise the Lord; they shall live forever and ever.

"All the nations shall remember the Lord, and shall turn toward Him; the peoples shall eat of His bread and adore Him.

"Kings shall make it their dainties: these also shall adore the Lord, and shall prostrate themselves before Him." *

Affections and Prayers. †

Permit me to speak to Thee, O most loving Heart of my Jesus, from which has flowed all the sacraments, and especially this sacrament of love! I would render to Thee as much honor and glory as Thou procurest in the churches to Thy Eternal Father. O adorable Heart, enlighten those who know Thee not, to the end that they may know Thee! I adore Thee; I thank Thee; I love Thee in union with all the souls that love Thee upon earth and in heaven. O Heart most pure! purify my heart from all attachment to creatures, and fill it with Thy holy love. O Heart most gentle! make Thyself Master of my heart wholly, in such a way that it may be entirely Thine, and may always be able to say nothing is capable of separating it from Thee. O Heart most humble! teach me Thy humility. Heart full of meekness, communicate Thy gentleness to me. Take away out of my heart all that is displeasing to Thee!

* Psalm, xxi. † Taken from the works of St. Alphonsus.

Convert it entirely to Thyself, so that it may neither wish nor desire anything but what Thou approvest. In a word, grant that I may live only to obey Thee, to love Thee, to please Thee. I know how much I am indebted to Thee, that Thou hast already too much obliged me; it is therefore very little if I be sacrificed and wholly consumed for Thee!

Practice.

Celebrate with special fervor the octave of the Most Holy Sacrament, Maundy Thursday, the devotion of the Forty Hours, and the Perpetual Adoration. Assist devoutly at processions. By frequent spiritual Communions respond to the desire which the divine Heart has to join itself to you.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Love of Loves—(*Continued*).

PROMISE OF THE EUCHARIST.—UNBELIEF OF THE JEWS. FAITH OF ST. PETER.—ACT OF FAITH.

"He that eateth this bread shall live forever."

"Many therefore of His disciples hearing it, said: This is a hard saying, and who can hear it? After this many of His disciples went back; and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will ye also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."—St. John, vi. 59, 61, 67, 68, 69.

When Jesus had given thanks to His Father He came down from the mountain full of joy and peace. He did not, like Moses, carry in His arms the tables of a law that was to work wrath;* but He bore in His Heart the inexhaustible treasures of grace and love, and He burned to communicate them to men. His disciples were still upon the lake wrestling with contrary winds, and trying by hard rowing to reach the opposite shore. Jesus joined them, walking upon the waters, and instantly brought them to land.

In the morning, the Jews whom He had fed by multiplying the five loaves came to seek Him, hoping to see a renewal of this miracle, or rather hoping for the future to eat without working, as their fathers did

* Rom. ii.

under the guidance of Moses. Jesus takes advantage of these dispositions to speak to them of a bread far better than that of the day before, and greatly superior to the manna of the desert. And although this carnal people were little capable of relishing this marvellous doctrine, the Good Master could no longer keep His secret within His heart. And we shall see how the Holy Eucharist began from this time forth to be a source of bitterness to Him.

The Jews.—Lord, when camest Thou hither? *

Jesus.—Ye seek Me, not because of the miracle which you saw; you are still as incredulous as before: but ye seek Me because of the bread which you have eaten in abundance, without cost. Cease to run after the bread which perisheth. Labor rather to render yourselves worthy of a bread which shall endure eternally, which the Son of man shall give unto you.

The Jews.—What shall we do to have this bread?

Jesus.—Believe in Me.

The Jews.—But first of all prove to us Your mission, as Moses proved his. Moses fed our fathers in the wilderness, with bread from heaven. And what have You done to make us believe in You?

Thus the miracle of the previous day, as well as many others, was not sufficient to prove to these ingrate hearts that Jesus was the Sent of God. They had not believed when they saw earthly things, and how much stronger reason was there to think that they would refuse to believe when addressed about heavenly things? † And yet the Good Master is not abashed.

Jesus.—The bread which Moses gave you came not from heaven; but My Father will give you a bread that is really heavenly. For the bread of God is He who is

* St. John vi. is here freely translated. † St. John, iii. 12.

come from heaven among you, to give life unto the world.

They understood nothing of such plain speech. It was as if one discoursed of the light to a man born blind.

They thought only of bread for the body,—that for the soul was to them a senseless expression. It is so with many Christians in our day. They have forgotten their own dignity, says the Psalmist, and may be compared to animals deprived of reason whom they resemble.* Listen.

The Jews.—Lord, evermore give us this bread!

Jesus.—It is I who am the bread of life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. But I have already said, you do not believe in Me: I cannot therefore give you of My bread.

But why talk to them at all? It was because they wished it, and by wishing it, they might render themselves worthy to receive, by submitting their intelligences to the teachings of the Divine Doctor. For this is a mystery of faith. Thus He said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou didst know the gift of God, . . . thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

But has He succeeded in arousing their desires and elevating their thoughts even a little above the flesh? On the contrary, just now they called His divine mission in question, now they altogether deny it. His sublime teaching, His miracles so numerous and varied, the marvellous cures which He had performed, the multiplication even of the loaves,—all are effaced from

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* Psalm, xlviii. 21.

the memory of His hearers. He has become in their eyes no more than an ordinary man.

The Jews.—What! Is not this the son of Joseph, of that artisan whose father and mother we know? And yet He dares to say that He came down from heaven!

As we have seen, Jesus was no longer a prophet in their eyes, nor even a virtuous man. He was a vile impostor, whose miracles were but tricks, and His doctrine a tissue of lies. Doubtless He will give up these unbelievers, and await more favorable circumstances, and a better disposed audience.

But no, He will still speak, and more and more clearly; His charity constrains Him, like a generous wine, fermenting, and seeking an issue, and which, finding none, ends by bursting the vessel which was too frail to contain it.* If only one person present profits by His loving invention, if even all the rest should say of Him, like they of Jerusalem: "He hath a devil, and is mad: why hear you Him?"† He will go on to the very end, He will allow His secret to escape Him, the new wine of His love.

Jesus.—Cease to murmur! I know that those only will come to Me whom the Father will draw to Me. Let Me speak for their sakes, for those who believe in Me have everlasting life. I am, I say, the bread of life. You spoke just now of the manna, and coveted the lot of those who partook of it. But this food did not prevent them from dying. But here is a bread which has come down from heaven to save those who partake of it from spiritual and eternal death. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eateth of this bread he shall live forever, and this bread is My flesh, which I will give to revivify the world.

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* Job, xxxii. 19. † St. John, x. 20.

Ought not affirmations so explicit and clear to have produced conviction? Far from it. The murmuring redoubled. The Jews disputed among themselves, and their clamor drowned the divine Master's voice: "What does He say? Give us His flesh to eat?"

It is now quite clear that the Saviour is losing His time with these carnal men. Will not prudence induce Him to be silent? Prudence! Love scarcely understands it. Listen to Him. He makes a sign with His hand, and silence is partly restored. Is He about to retract adroitly what He has said? Will He not at least soften down for the Jews that which has been too shocking in what He has advanced?

Jesus.—Truly, truly I say unto you, unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As I live by the Father who hath sent Me, so he that eateth Me shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven of which I spoke to you. Your fathers ate the manna and are dead, but those who eat of this bread shall live forever.

O Jesus! God of love, what art Thou doing? The idea of eating Thy flesh shocks them, and now Thou completest their irritation by proposing to them to drink Thy blood. Jews drink blood! Why, they have a horror of it. Moses forbade it to them. Alas! the day is not distant when they will cause Thine own to flow beneath the scourge and the nails,—but *drink* it! Assuredly, Love seems to have made Thee forgetful of the advice full of wisdom which Thou gavest one day to

Thy disciples: "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you they tear you." *

But, at least, the disciples will believe. A few, no doubt. But hear what these say, and St. John says they were numerous: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?"

And from that moment they abandoned Him, unwilling any longer to believe the Master's words, unwilling even to follow Him. They feared to be asked if they also were disciples of the Galilean!

O Jesus, thus did earth receive the revelation of a mystery which plunged the heavens in astonishment. Thou scatterest love and light with lavish hand, only to reap incredulity and scorn. But since there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence, is not this the time for Thee, O Eternal Word, to relapse into silence? to hide under a bushel that light whose bright glow dazzles the carnal eyes of the children of the Synagogue? If Thou persistest in this teaching, Thy few remaining disciples will quit Thee, and Thou wilt be left alone, an object of ridicule to Thy foes. They will say as they behold Thee pass along: "Behold the Teacher without disciples. His doctrine is so absurd that it has revolted even the few poor ignorant ones whom He at first seduced." At least spare the Twelve. Retain them by some timely word!

"No," He seems to reply, "I despise worldly skill; all my tact is Love! I am Love personified, † I am the gift of the Divine Love to men. ‡ To believe in God's

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* St. Matt. vii. 6. † 1 St. John, iv.
‡ St. John, iii. 10.

love for men, this is the first condition of My discipleship." He turns to the Twelve and says, "And will ye also go away?" "Lord," replies Peter, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe, and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God."

Oh, how far more penetrating is the simplicity of a faithful and humble heart than the proud wisdom of a reason that pretends to believe only what it understands! Jesus had said, "I am the Son of God." His whole life, His death, and His resurrection bear witness to this saying. Therefore Jesus *is* the Son of God. But He had also said: "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." Therefore the flesh of Jesus is an aliment, and His blood a beverage. What shall we seek beyond this? That we should be astonished at His love is not wonderful; but since His word is infallible, and His power infinite, let us not inquire with the Jews. "How shall He give us His flesh to eat?" But let us say to Him with Peter: "Lord, we know and believe that Thou art the Son of God, and that Thy words are spirit and life; and so we believe because of Thy word in the mystery of Thy love."

Thanks, O great Apostle! Thanks to thee, Simon, son of John! Already thou has merited the name of Peter, in being the first to confess the divinity of Jesus. To-day thou doubly meritest it, because thou art the first to bear witness to the special sacrament of His Heart. The waves of heresy may be agitated at the pleasure of the spirit of falsehood, and seek to wreck thy bark; but, strong in thy Master's word, thou shalt trample them beneath thy feet. Superficial and haughty minds will not cease through the whole course of time to try to breach the Church's walls, but built upon the im-

pregnable rock of thy twice-proved faith, the Church will defy to the end of the ages all the rage of hell and its agents. She will ever believe what thou didst believe,—namely, that the Son of man is in very truth the Son of God, equal to, and consubstantial with, His Father, and that it is *truly*, *really*, and *substantially* His flesh and His blood which He gives us in the adorable Eucharist. Thanks, on behalf of thy Master whom thy faith consoled for the incredulity of others. Thanks also on behalf of ourselves, whose faith is strengthened by Thy testimony.

Act of Faith.

O Lord, we believe with Peter, with Paul, with John, with Matthew, with Mark, with Luke, with all the holy apostles, martyrs, pontiffs, doctors, confessors, and virgins, with all the faithful children of the Holy Roman Church, in that love * which, not satisfied with giving Thy blood for our ransom, Thou givest together with Thy sacred flesh to be the food of our souls. We believe that at the word of the priest the substance of bread and of wine is changed into the substance of Thy body and blood. We comprehend it not, O Lord, but we believe it. And we rejoice to believe without understanding it, because Thou hast said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." † We rejoice to believe without understanding it, because it is good for us that the works of Thy love exceed the bounds of our intelligence. But, O God of Love, Thou art not so completely hidden in this mystery but that our hearts may sometimes feel the presence of Thine own. Oh, yes! whenever Thou wilt, the vivifying warmth of Thine

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* 1 St. John, iv. † St. John, xx. 29.

adorable Heart causes itself to be felt in our cold hearts and melts all their iciness. Then, like Thomas, we touch with our finger the wound which love has made, and cry out in the intoxication of our happiness, "Thou art my Lord and my God!"* With the disciples at Emmaus Thou art made known to us by the breaking of bread.†

And hast Thou not said, O my God, that the tree is known by its fruit? Why then have the virtues never ceased to flourish in the Holy Roman Church, if it be not because, like Elias, she has eaten of the mystic bread, the bread of the mighty, and tasted, like Jonathan, of the honey of the rock?‡ Why, on the contrary, are the heretical sects sterile and incapable of food,§ if it be not because they have forgotten to eat bread,‖ because their teachers, like the imprudent king Saul, have forbidden their people to taste anything upon the day of battle?¶

Thus everything testifies to our faith. In heaven we have three witnesses, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and they are one.** The Father says to us, pointing to His Word made flesh, "This is My beloved Son, listen to His teaching!" The Word says to us, "Take and eat, this is My body; take and drink, this is My blood!" And the Holy Spirit, who descended aforetime upon the Incarnate Word, to confirm all His doctrine, has ceased not from that time forward to speak by the mouth of apostles, and evangelists, and doctors.

And upon the earth itself we have three witnesses:

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* St. John, xx. † St. Luke, xxiv.
‡ 3 Kings, xix. 6; 1 Kings, xiv. 27.
§ Titus, i. ‖ Psalm, ci.
¶ 1 Kings, xiv. ** 1 St. John, v. 7.

The spirit, and the water, and the blood, and their testimony is unanimous.* The spirit of life which animates the Catholic Church and renders her fruitful in good works and in saints of all conditions in life; the water of trial and of heresy, which, seeking to extinguish the torch of her faith, has only served to make it more brilliant; and, finally, the blood of martyrs, who died because they believed in the love which Thou hast had for us, O Jesus. Doubtless Thy sole word had sufficed, but this superabundance of light ceases not to gladden our eyes.

We believe therefore, O God, but deign to increase our faith! Give us a lively and active faith, and grant that in our turn we may render testimony to the truth of Thy word, by making our conduct for the future harmonize with our belief. Amen.

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* 1 St. John, v.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Love of Loves—(*Continuea*).

THE HERETICS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY—LUTHER. CALVIN.—AFFECTIONS AND PRAYER.

"Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel."—Isaias, xlvi. 3.

"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. But My people heard not My voice, and Israel hearkened not to Me."—Psalm, lxxx. 11, 12.

"Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent: like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, which will not hear the voice of the charmers."—Psalm, lvii. 5, 6.

"They have thrown down Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets."—3 Kings, xix. 10.

We have already seen how the first revelation and simple promise of the Eucharist brought to Jesus, on the part of the Jews, only affronts and outrages, while it gave rise to the defection of a large number of His disciples. And yet all this could not induce Him to renounce His project so full of love, nor even to conceal till another opportunity His sweet secret within His Heart. He preferred to expose Himself to be left alone, rather than to hide from us, even for an instant, the love which hurried Him on.

Ever since its institution, the Holy Eucharist, that inexhaustible spring of sweetness and grace to us, has not ceased to be a fruitful spring of bitterness, and the occasion of many offences to the Heart of Jesus. But in

these later times, these offences have reached such a point that one knows not which to be most astonished at, human ingratitude, or the immense meekness of that divine Heart and its invincible love for His elect.

Down to the sixteenth century, all Christians, comprising heretics, and even the Arians, who denied the divinity of the Son of God, had always understood in the same sense the clear and simple words that Christ had pronounced when, holding in His venerable hands the bread and the cup, He said to His apostles : "*This is My body ; this is My blood : do this in commemoration of Me.*" It is true that an obscure sectary had once upon a time dared to combat the faith of the Universal Church, a faith invariable for twelve centuries. But, crushed by the unanimous reprobation of its pastors and its faithful, he saw himself compelled to retract and anathematize his own error.

Enraged that he had for so long a period employed each in its turn, persecution and heresy against the Church in vain, Satan determined to make a supreme effort. He deemed the time ripe to strike a blow at its very heart. I mean to take away from this Mother of all the living the divine Heart in which she found birth, and from which she still draws forth her life and strength day by day, as a child from its mother's breast. This is why he raised up two of the most daring innovators the world had hitherto seen.

The first was Luther. The following is what this reprobate has recorded in his works, but with a little less of his cynicism. "As I thought upon my bed of the surest mode of overturning the Roman Church, it seemed to me that I ought to deny the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. But *the devil appeared to me*, and turned me from this plan, saying that the insti-

tuting words of this sacrament were too clear for the meaning to be disputed. He advised me rather to deny that the Mass was a true sacrifice, and I stopped there."

That was the first step. Calvin succeeded Luther in his impious task. Was it Satan that altered his mind, or was Calvin even more audacious than Satan himself? I cannot say. But it is a fact that Calvin dared to say that the words, *This is my body*, meant, *This is the emblem of my body*. Did he think that the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ was beyond the divine power? Certainly not. But this man, devoid of every good feeling, could not bring himself to believe that the God-man could love us so far as to nourish us with His very substance. It was in vain that he read in St. John's first epistle this adorable definition of God. "GOD IS LOVE." This is the reason why we believe in the love which He has shown us. "Yes," said he, "but not to this point." And a part of Europe preferred the opinion of this fierce sectary to the words of Jesus Christ, and it believes them no longer. This saying, sweeter than honey, "*Take and eat, this is My body*," they found hard. *Durus est hic sermo;* and they retired from the paternal bosom, they tore themselves from the loving embraces of the Heart of Jesus. *Et abierunt retro*,* they went back.

We know what horrors were the consequence of that heresy. Priests murdered, sanctuaries polluted, sacked, and burnt; the sacred vessels profaned, the host scattered about, and trodden under foot! *Hæc fecisti et tacui.*† This is what they did, and Jesus remained silent. He did not even retract the engagement which He had made with His Father to descend upon our altars at the

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* St. John, vi. 67.

† Psalm, xlix. 21.

voice of the priest. Why? Saint John tells us, Because He is love : *Deus charitas est.*

Affections and Prayer.

O my God, how has the pure gold become dimmed! How have these nations, once holy, become the playthings of falsehood and the prey of impiety!

Erraverunt ab utero, "They have torn themselves from the womb that bore them." They have rejected the bread which their Mother offered them ; they have spurned the celestial manna, and craved for the fleshpots of Egypt.

They have given up the waters of Siloe that flow softly, to assuage their thirst in the troubled waters of the torrent.

They have overturned Thine altars, slain Thy prophets, dispersed Thy saints.

And the chaste legions that praised Thee day and night have fled from these murderous lands ; and with them have departed the pious chant, the peace of repentance, the mystic joys of ecstasy, and the guardian angels of the profaned sanctuaries.

And the perpetual sacrifice was interrupted, and the lamp ceased to burn before the tabernacle, and the rod of Aaron to bud with the white flower of virginity.

Because they have trodden under foot the bread of the elect and the wine of virgins. Because they have preferred the pasturage of the vilest animals to the food of angels.

And now, beneath those roofs that heretofore echoed unceasingly the songs of Sion, we hear only the clank of the criminal's fetters, the refrain of the courtesan, or the blasphemies of the trooper.

Lord, when wilt Thou visit this vine, of old Thy delight, to-day lying desolate?

Lord, pity these blinded ones, whom blind guides are leading into the gulf! Their fathers sinned and are no more: how long, O Lord, will they suffer for the crimes of their ancestors?

We know that Thou art ever faithful to Thy word: righteous are Thy judgments. And no one is ever lost in ignorance.

But how many obstinate sinners are there whose malice has been conquered by Thy omnipotent goodness!

Oh, bring back again in like manner these prodigal and rebellious children, that feeling their misery they may blush, exclaiming: "There is delicious bread abounding upon our Father's table; why then die we here with hunger? We will arise. We will go to our Father!"

May they come at last, O my God!

Practice.

Communicate frequently. Ask of God each day, through the intercession of Mary, the destroyer of heresies, the conversion of heretical nations. Inscribe your name in the *Association for the Propagation of the Faith.*

CHAPTER XV.

The Love of Loves—(*Concluded*).

THE EUCHARIST IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.—A PICTURE OF THE INGRATITUDE AND OFFENCES OF BELIEVERS TO THE CAPTIVE OF THE TABERNACLE.—AFFECTIONS AND PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION.

"I am the good shepherd. I am come that they (My sheep) may have life and may have it more abundantly. . . . And the bread that I will give is My flesh."—St. John, vi. x.

"What are these wounds? . . . With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me."—Zach. xiii. 6.

We shall now speak of the Catholic Church. Here Jesus is at home. And if He delights to abide with His spouse in exile, the Church in return welcomes this divine Bridegroom with joy, although still disguised; and she surrounds Him with all the outward marks of faith, respect, and love. Her marble temples, her precious vessels, her magnificent ornaments, her splendid festivals, sufficiently testify that the dearest object which she possesses is that mystic bread with which she feeds her children.

But do these children always participate in the sentiments of their Mother respecting the God of the Eucharist? Has He not here many affronts to put up with, and to use the language of Zacharias, is He not often wounded in the house of those who profess to love Him? We will explain this presently.

Contemplate for a moment the ravishing spectacle which the angels behold in this holy assembly, this race

at once sacerdotal and royal, this chosen people * ranged beneath the shadow of the Tabernacle of the New Covenant.

From north to south, from east to west † the Church possesses children. This is one of her inalienable marks, one of her glories. She is circumscribed neither by time nor place. For as long as man dwells here below, according to St. Paul, he is but a little child. ‡ He requires that spiritual milk of which the prince of the apostles speaks. § A prophet promised to the children of the New Jerusalem that they should all drink of her breasts. ‖ Where then shall this Mother of nations find a sufficiency of nurses for her innumerable progeny? "What," answers Jesus, "nurses! Let others confide their children to alien nurses, but as for Me, I will carry all Mine in My Heart, even to hoary hairs. ¶ I will suckle them Myself, with My own blood."

How canst Thou do that, Lord, without exhausting Thyself? "That is my secret. I give all My blood to all and to each; and I give it continually." "But how canst Thou run from one to another every day, Lord! Has Thy holy humanity wings swifter than those of the morning?" ** "Nothing is difficult to My love. See you this immense and tumultuous city? Count the crosses that rise hither and thither, like so many beacons in this sea more fruitful in shipwrecks than ocean itself. I am there, wherever thou beholdest that sign of salvation. I abide there day and night, and without being divided I find means to *distribute* Myself in divers places. Count the gilded basilicas, and the whitewashed chapels

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* 1 St. Peter, ii.
† Malachias, i.
‡ 1 Cor. xiii.
§ 1 St Peter, ii.
‖ Isaias, lxvi.
¶ Isaias, xlvi. 4.
** Psalm, cxxxviii.

that rise upon the entire surface of the globe, from its most powerful city to the latest barbarian tribe to which one of My priests has penetrated,—everywhere I am, I remain, a captive, a prisoner of love. I hear the prayers of all who come to seek Me. I solace their ills, I give My own self to those who ask Me. The monastery, the hospital, the crëche, even the convict prison possesses Me. I hasten to the sick man's pallet, I follow My friends even down into the mines.

"Mark that son of unhappy Poland, condemned by a tyrant to dig in the mines of Siberia. He is a priest. His hands, anointed with holy oil, are lacerated with fetters. But in the morning, before he begins his task as a slave, he takes in his hands a morsel of the bread that is measured out to him, and which he bedews with his sweat and his tears. He pours out a few drops of wine in some coarse vessel, and then, without other ornaments than his galley slave's dress, without other altar than the trunk of a tree or a shapeless stone, he pronounces the sacred words, and I descend, and communicate Myself to him and to his companions in misery, and I console them, and in My Heart they find fresh courage, strength, and joy, yea even to their lost fatherland."*

But in return for so much love, doubtless, Lord, Thou art ardently beloved by Thy faithful ones? Doubtless a mighty chant of praise rises to Thee from the four corners of the earth, and the voices of those who bless Thee cease not day or night?

Oh, it seems to me as if the good Jesus feared to reply, lest His Father should hear His complaints, and

* Decree of His Holiness Pius IX. This unheard-of favor granted by the captive Pontiff to captive priests has something touching in it. These mines are the Catacombs of Russia.

take Him from us. Let us speak then on His behalf. Let us place under the eyes of the children of the Church the abridged picture of their ingratitudes, that at least some few may reflect and strive to console the Heart of Jesus.

Let us enter one of the numerous churches where the God of love reposes. Behold the tabernacle. The soft rays of a lamp inform us that He is there. Where then are His worshippers? Excepting the angels, no one is there. But it is an obscure village church, the few inhabitants are poor; and perhaps the harvest is ripe, and the gathering clouds in the sky announce rain. They are gone to gather in the grain which is their only food, and in the evening they will surely come to thank Him who gave it to them. Let us not be too severe, the Sacred Heart will not require more from them than this.

Let us transport ourselves to a great city. Here at least there is a considerable number of the faithful who have leisure, and are not forced to gain their bread in the sweat of their brow. Doubtless the churches are filled with worshippers. Let us see: it is the same solitude, or perhaps a very few of the friends of the Heart of Jesus are prostrated at the foot of His altars. And it is the hour when the Holy Sacrifice is offered! But perhaps the city is menaced by an invading army of foes, and the inhabitants are all upon the walls or in the breach; or, maybe an epidemic keeps at the bedside of the sick those who are not yet smitten. Alas! the drawing-rooms, the antechambers, the promenades, the pleasure resorts, overflow with people! O my God, under what pretext canst Thou pardon such as these? Ministers of the Lord, close the gates of the temple, that He may have less cause to blush at man's indifference!

But here is a church where a solemnity has attracted a number of persons. Let us see how the God of the Eucharist is honored. Here is a group strolling about without regard to anything but the architectural beauties of the place. They stop and chat among themselves, walk on, and finally go out, without even offering their *compliments* to the master of the house. Let us close our eyes; maybe they are only heretics.

But how do those who are assisting at the Sacrifice of the Mass conduct themselves? Let us be just. There is a certain number evidently absorbed in adoration and prayer. May they be blessed, and may the Sacred Heart fulfil all their desires!

But what are these doing, with folded arms, and eyes wandering listlessly? What do these occupy themselves with, whither wander their insensate eyes? And this vain-glorious woman, who seems to have come to dispute the palm with Jesus Christ, and to attract hearts by glances, why is her look so vacant? The organ ceases. The chant of the triple Sanctus which Isaias caught from the harps of seraphim is hushed in silence. The sanctuary bell causes its silvery voice to be heard alone, to demand an increase of attention and love. For the only-begotten Son of God descends upon the altar, and offers Himself to His Father for our sins and necessities. The truly faithful bow the head in lowliest adoration, others, who up to this point had remained standing, at the least bend the knee. But how is it that there are so many who give no mark of respect whatever? When the priest of Jupiter presented the knife to the throat of his victim, the pagans present at the sacrifice covered their faces with their mantles in token of adoration. And yet there are Christians who can behold the sacrifice of their God with an indifferent eye!

PRACTICE.

Take pleasure in visiting the Holy Sacrament. Unite yourself with the angels in adoring it in those churches where it is most forsaken.

Affections and Prayer after Holy Communion.

Consummatum est, "All is consummated." Thou saidst it upon the cross, O Jesus, after having drunk to the very dregs the bitter cup of humiliations and sorrows; after having exhausted in Thy sacred body and in Thy holy soul all the rigor of the divine vengeance. And I repeat it, seated at Thy table, after drinking of the inebriating cup of Thy delights, at the torrent of Thy chaste pleasures, after exhausting the potency of Thy love. *Consummatum est.* Even Thy magnificence could not surpass this.

It is then Thou, O Jesus, who art in me! And I possess *really, truly, and substantially* the very Son of God, the very Son of the Virgin Mary.

I believe it, O Lord, as I believe my own existence, as I believe in the Holy Trinity, as I believe in one only God.

For was it not Thou, O Eternal Word, that saidst: "Take and eat, for this is My body. Take and drink, for this is My blood"?

And if this was not the truth, O Jesus, Thou hast deceived me. Thou wouldst not be God at all; and if Thou art not God, then there is none.

But, O God, what a mystery, what an astonishing marvel! I need all the authority of Thy infallible word to believe it.

Not that Thy power astonishes me. I know that it is boundless as Thyself.

But that which surprises me, Lord, which goes utterly beyond me, and demands all the exertion of my faith, is Thy love and Thy goodness.

This approximation of Thy infinite greatness and my infinite littleness enables me the better to sound the depths of this double abyss. I feel as though crushed beneath the weight of such a great benefit; as though lost in its immensity.

It is like a boundless sea, in which I am submerged: like a new universe, more vast and magnificent than the former, where I am left alone with Thee.

Is it possible, O Lord, that Thou wouldst play with my lowliness, as a king will sometimes for a single day place his royal crown upon the brow of a poor slave? Is it a challenge that Thou givest me, to love Thee always as Thou hast loved me?

Or is it that in the jealousy of Thy loving kindness Thou wouldst say to me, "How long wilt thou hesitate between Me and creatures? Let them bestow upon thee all that they are able, and I, on My part, will give thee a present. Let thy heart then judge between us, and definitely decide for them or for Me."

O my God, is it worthy of Thee to dispute my heart with such rivals? And was it necessary to employ all Thy power in a conflict where my heart was the prize?

O my God, my reason yields at the sight of such a prodigy. Truly Thou hast not done more to curb Egypt and rescue the chosen people.

What! Thou who fillest the universe art willing to confine Thyself to the narrow space of my heart?

How couldst Thou, who art holy! holy! holy! surmount the revulsion that such a place must have inspired?

Is it not Thou who holdest the earth between Thy fingers, and who shakest it to cast out the wicked?

Is it not Thou who hast spread out the firmament of the heavens, as a tent that is builded for a night, and struck at dawn?

Is it not Thou who commandest the winds, the tempests, and the waves of the sea, and the lightnings; before whose progress the mountains dissolve as wax?

And I, what am I? A herb of the field; a flower; a breath; a shadow.

And Thou art in me, O Lord, and I still live, and sink not into nothingness!

O God, if the jealousy of zeal constrained the apostle to speak folly, would not the surprise into which Thy love has thrown me excuse me if I should utter foolishness? Yes, if even Thou shouldst tax me with folly, I would glorify myself in Thee.

And I said myself: No; I am no longer a herb, a flower, a breath, or a shadow; I am a God: I am a God, I say, and I will adopt sentiments worthy of a God!

Volo, Pater. Hear then, O Father, that which I wish Thee to grant. I say, *I will*, O Father, for it is no longer a servant that addresses Thee, but Thy Son. He is in me, I am in Him, I am one with Him. I am a branch of the vine, the member of Christ, the bone and the flesh of Christ, I am another Christ!

I feel His heart palpitating in my bosom; His blood circulating in and warming my veins. I feel that I am Thy son and that I love Thee with the Heart of Thine only-begotten Son.

It is He who lives in me. As to myself, I live no longer. His spirit is in my bowels, and presses me toward Thee with ineffable sighings, and by my lips He cries: *Abba, Pater!* Father, My Father!

Volo, Pater. Behold then, O my Father, that which I desire in the spirit of Thy Son.

I would that Thy name might be sanctified, and that all the children of Adam might join with the heavenly intelligences in singing Thy praises. I would that Thy kingdom might come, and that it may extend from the east to the west, from the north to the south.

I would that Thy will should be fulfilled upon earth as perfectly as in the heavens, and that it may become the sole rule of human conduct here below.

I would that Thou fulfil the promise made to Thy Son on sending Him into the world: to give unto Him as His inheritance, all nations, and peoples, and tongues, and to extend His sway to the utmost confines of the world.

That all men may know the Son even as they know the Father, and that there may be but one fold and one shepherd.

I wish still further, O my Father, that Thou wouldst defend, and comfort, and clasp to Thy Heart Thy beloved daughter, the spouse of Thy Son, and My own beloved mother, the Church.

Dry up her tears; take away her garment of widowhood, and clothe her again with strength and glory, as in the days of her youth.

Confound her enemies, and compel them to prostrate themselves before Thee, and kiss the dust of her feet.

And finally, I will, O my Father, that all mankind may meet in the arms and beneath the wings of this *Mother of all the living*. That they may love as becometh brethren. That henceforth they may have but one voice only to bless Thee, one heart only to love Thee, that Thou mayest be *all in all*. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Good Shepherd.

THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN—PRAYER.

"I am the good shepherd, and I know Mine and Mine know Me. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."—St. John, x. 14, 16.

THE above is one of the most fragrant texts of the Gospel of St. John, where every one is delicious. Jesus is journeying to Galilee through a dry and mountainous country. He has to pass the village of Sichar, and at a short distance from it, hunger, thirst, heat, and fatigue have so far exhausted Him that He is compelled to halt. He sits upon the border of Jacob's well, and sends His disciples to purchase provisions.

Quærens me sedisti lassus! Faint and weary Thou hast sought me. Tired with seeking after me Thou didst sit down! Beholding Him thus panting, wiping the perspiration which covers His face, perhaps, O Christian soul, you imagine that He thought of Himself, and complained to His Father of the inutility of His journeyings. But far different thoughts occupied His Heart.

There exists in the schismatical town a soul,—one that is stamped with the seal of His elect. She is living in error, she is living in sin. He must extricate her from them; He must snatch this poor sheep from the jaws of the wolf. There is a soul to be saved,—is not

that saying everything? Jesus feels troubled, His Heart is on fire; it is a solemn hour with Him. Do you think that He who inspired a certain saint with the thought, "*Save a soul and then die*," could behold unmoved the hour arrive when one was to be saved? Ah, shall we venture to say so?—the Heart of Jesus is in travail-pangs.* Listen to His secretly-murmured prayer: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee." Give Me this soul, that she may know Thee, the only true God, and that she may recognize as the Christ, Jesus, whom Thou hast sent, for "this is eternal life." †

Jesus raises His eyes, and perceives the elect one. It is a woman carrying a pitcher which she is going to the well to fill. Happy Samaritan! if thou only couldst guess what living fountain is before thee thou wouldst hasten to draw of the well of salvation.‡ But all this is still hidden from thee,—there must be a struggle to induce thee to come to the well of life, but thou wilt come finally.

At sight of her, the emotion of the divine Heart is redoubled. It quivers with gratification, as does the heart of the falconer when he sees the bird approach the hidden snare; as does the soul of the fisherman when he sees the fish swim into his net.

She approaches Jacob's well, and salutes the Saviour with an inquisitive glance. But perceiving that He is a Jew, she refrains from addressing Him. Jesus returns the salutation, and observes her closely. Meanwhile the Samaritan has drawn her pitcher of water, and, like Rebecca of old, places it upon her shoulder and prepares to go.

"Woman, give Me to drink!" O Jesus, I seem here

* Gal. 4. † St. John, xvii. 1, 3. ‡ Isaias, xii.

to hear that cry which burst from Thy Heart upon the cross. *Sitio*, "I thirst!" For at Jacob's well, as upon Calvary, the thirst which especially besets Thee is a thirst for the salvation of souls, the burning thirst of zeal.

The Samaritan is surprised that a Jew should make such a request. And probably she refused this slight refreshment to the Saviour from fear lest her pitcher should be contaminated by contact with a stranger's lips, for St. John does not say that she gave Him to drink.

Will the Heart of Jesus resent this affront? Zeal resents nothing. She refuses Him a drop of water; He Himself will offer her another water, of which He is the source. *Si scires donum Dei.* "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

You see, dear reader, that Jesus thirsts less for water than for the salvation of this soul. Instead of insisting upon His request, He strives to awaken in the soul of the sinner a spiritual thirst, and induce her to quench it in the waves of His grace. *Si scires;* if thou only didst know! If thou knewest the gift of God! If thou knewest who I am! It is the eagle presenting a prey to its eaglet to persuade it to issue forth from its nest for the first time, and dart into space.* It is the angler who plays the bait before the fish. It is the shepherd offering a green bough to his sheep to induce it to follow him.†

But the faithless one does not give in so readily. In place of asking Jesus, like Saul struck to the earth on the way to Damascus, "Who art Thou?" she opposes

* Deut. xxxii. † St. Augustine.

her doubts to the advances of the Sacred Heart. And yet she feels touched by His gentle influence, and already calls Him "Sir."

"Sir, Thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep: from whence then hast Thou living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank thereof himself and his children; and his cattle?"

She fails to understand Him, but her attention is aroused, and Jesus speaks still more clearly.

"Whoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst forever. But the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting."

Moved by the mild authority and the persuasive tone of the Saviour, the fortunate Samaritan commences to believe. Already the eaglet is on the edge of the nest, and forgetful of his fears, sees only the tempting prey that offers itself. Already the rebellious sheep has taken its first step toward the Saviour. And yet she does not understand. She is too much occupied with temporal things. It is a good distance from Sichar to the well, the path is rough, and several times each day she is obliged to come and fill her pitcher. She imagines that the Saviour is about to bestow upon her a miraculous water, which, like the oil blessed by Elias,* will not cease to flow. "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw."

Jesus then adopts a last means to make sure of His conquest, an infallible method with upright souls. He will prove to her His divine mission, by showing her that without having ever seen her, He knows her inti-

* 3 Kings, xvii.

mately. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." The Samaritan makes an avowal: "I have no husband." It is true, replies Jesus, "thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

The sinner completes her confession: "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet." She is humbled, and the principal impediment to faith—pride—is overthrown. Henceforth the living waters will flow from the Heart of Jesus into her own. But before going farther she desires to be enlightened about the religious question that separated the Jews from the Samaritans. "Our fathers adored on this mountain, and you say that at Jerusalem is the place where men must adore." Without entering into many details, Jesus tells her that the Jews are right. But He adds that their religion and their coarse worship had had its day; that henceforth it was not to be upon Mount Garizim, nor upon Mount Sion alone, but in every place, that the sacrifice which God demands shall be offered. He evidently speaks here of the sacrifice upon our altars, for the sacrifice of the lips,—prayer,—has been always offered upon those spots.

The Samaritan finds it a little hard to renounce all at once the faith of her fathers. And yet she is ready to do so, when she has become sufficiently enlightened. "I know that the Messias cometh (who is called Christ); therefore when He is come He will tell us all things." Then Jesus conceals Himself no longer. "I am He who am speaking with thee."

Meanwhile, the apostles had returned with provisions, and were much surprised to find Him talking with a woman. But was it not worth while for Him to depart from His wonted manner, when there was question of saving a soul? They approach Him and ex-

claim, "Rabbi, eat!" "I have meat to eat which you know not." The disciples in their astonishment query among themselves as to whether any person had brought Him food in their absence. "My meat," said He, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work." And what is this work, if it be not the salvation of souls; for when He punishes He does a work that is strange to him: *Alienum opus ejus.*

Then hearken to the burning eloquence of His zeal: "Perhaps you would say to Me,—why so much eagerness? The proverb says, *There are yet four months and then the harvest cometh.* Well, I reply: *Lift up your eyes and see the countries,*—the harvest is white, and awaits but the sickle."

But, good Jesus, the Samaritan is gone! What hinders Thee while awaiting her return from taking some slight nourishment to repair Thy strength, and so work afterwards with increased vigor?

I will tell you why, good reader; *zeal has taken away his appetite*, as sorrow took away that of the prophet when they said, "*Where is thy God?*"* As penitence took away that of St. Paul after his conversion.† He must first of all satisfy His chosen. *Sine prius satiari filios,*‡ "Suffer first the children to be filled." So does the hen,—that gentle image of the Heart of Jesus, to which He condescended to compare Himself,—forgetful of her own necessity, only eat when she has provided for her young brood.

While Jesus is talking to His disciples, the Samaritan woman has gone back to Sichar, in the transports of joy leaving her water-pitcher behind. Let us rather say, that the zeal which consumes the Heart of Jesus

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* Psalm, xli. 4. † Acts, ix.

‡ St. Mark, vii. 27.

had passed into hers. She has left her pitcher behind that she may go the quicker, for she burns to make her countrymen taste of the water of which she has drunk herself. She has become an apostle, and to win souls to Jesus Christ is not afraid to speak of circumstances that are disgraceful. "Come and see a man who has told me all things whatsoever I have done." And a great number of the Samaritans believed, and came to seek Jesus, and drink also of the fountain of water that springeth up unto eternal life. They emulate each other in proclaiming that this was indeed the promised Messias, and were the first in the universe to bestow upon Him the precious title of "*Saviour of the world.*"

What a lesson this is for us! A poor woman, scarcely snatched from the darkness of infidelity, wins a whole town to Christ! And we who for so many years have professed to love and serve Him have never, probably, either by our prayers or our exhortations, procured the salvation of a single soul! Whence, then, proceeds our sterility? It is because the sacred flame of zeal does not consume our hearts. It is because we know not how to imitate the holy generosity of this Samaritan. She never rested till she had made Jesus known to her townsfolk. And we cannot strip ourselves of our indolence and apathy. She left her pitcher behind to go the quicker and not to lose a single moment, and we cannot take an hour from our business, our trifles, our pleasures, to occupy ourselves in the salvation of our brethren. She tramples human respect beneath her feet, and speaks to whoever will listen of her former sins, to prove that He whom she had met at the well is the promised Christ. And we allow our lips to be sealed by false shame, when it behooves us to testify to

the Lord Jesus Christ. We seek the cover of darkness to do our works of piety, which ought to be performed in the face of the sun, to the glory of the name of Jesus.

Oh, let us begin to act like real apostles. And let our motto henceforth be that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "*My meat is to do My Father's will, that I may perfect His work.*"

Prayer.

O Heart of Jesus! O fount of living waters, O true well of Jacob, give unto me some drops of that water which Thou didst give unto the Samaritan woman,—of that water which quenches all thirst for transitory joys, and kindles in the soul the thirst of zeal. Let me henceforth forget this *earthen vessel*, this flesh, whose weight impedes my steps in the paths of sanctity.

Grant that by my prayers and my example at least, if I can do no more, I may help to bring into the barn of the Householder some one of those ears of corn which Thou hast so often bedewed with Thy sweat and with Thy blood! Amen.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Good Shepherd—(*Continued*).

THE HEART OF JESUS, THE ORGAN OF DIVINE MERCY.—MARY MAGDALEN.—HER CONVERSION.—HER REPENTANCE.—JESUS AND SIMON.—ABSOLUTION.—THANKSGIVING.—AFFECTIONS.

> "What man of you that hath a hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing: And coming home call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost?"—St. Luke, xv. 4 to 6.

God is infinitely merciful. He delights to call Himself "*the Father of mercies.*"* It is by this attribute especially that He loves to make Himself known to the children of Adam, upon whom He exercises His justice with regret. And yet God, who is immutable, is not influenced after the manner of men. In God there are neither passions nor affections "I am the Eternal One," He says, "I change not." Thus *mercy*, that is to say, the pity which pardons or succors, with ourselves is a *painful* emotion, excited by the aspect of *misery* or suffering in others. Now it is very clear that God cannot experience this painful emotion. Mercy with Him must be something more exalted, more pure, and of a kind beyond our comprehension. But because it

* 2 Cor. iii.

affects not God, and that He is not moved by it, and that it manifests itself exclusively by its effects, are we the less affected? On the contrary, you cannot more effectually console an afflicted heart than by entering into its sorrow and sharing it. And this is the exact meaning of the word *compassion.* So does St. Paul recommend to the faithful at Rome to "weep with them that weep."

In order, therefore, to make the mercy of God more appreciable and more lovable, the Holy Spirit has formed the Heart of Jesus, to be its medium and organ, at once human and divine. This Heart is the Heart of a God. Therefore its mercies are the mercies of God. But, on the other hand, this Heart is a Heart of flesh, like our own, a Heart capable of compassion, properly speaking, in the manner of our own. "We have not," says St. Paul, "a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things such as we are, without sin."* Thus the Heart of Jesus pities those who suffer, and so, in a sense, makes the mercies of God more lovable. This is why the Holy Spirit, speaking by anticipation of the efficaciousness of this means of attracting men to God, says by the mouth of the prophet: "I will draw them with the cords of Adam,"—that is, by ties that can be felt and which are more in accord with their own nature.

Let us study the divine mercies in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And there is nothing so calculated to console, reassure, and encourage poor sinners—I mean repentant and humble sinners—as the way in which He treated such during His earthly life.

There was in the town where Jesus then found Him-

* Heb. iv. 15.

self "a woman that was a sinner." That is to say, a notorious sinner, a woman of evil repute; consequently, one of the vilest, most abject, and most despicable beings in society. According to common opinion it was Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. She received the surname of *Magdalen* (*Magdalena*) because she ordinarily inhabited the village of Magdala, where she had a mansion. She was possessed of seven devils, having abandoned herself unrestrainedly to all kinds of sin. She is the object upon which the Heart of Jesus wills to display its mercies. See the being of whom he intends to make a seraphim! He destines Mary Magdalen to be the model of penitents and loving souls. No other here below came near to her in loyalty to Jesus Christ save the Virgin Mother. She is to become the type of contemplative souls, and one day will be called the "*holy lover of our Saviour.*"* But how far removed she is from this at present! Her unbridled luxuriousness, her immodest garb, her bold gaze, her haughtiness, her scandalous behavior have made her the talk of all the country. How is this prodigious change to be effected?

When God resolved to create the light, He needed but a word: *Fiat!* It will be different here. How shall this heart which has made so many victims become in its turn the happy captive of divine Love?

The early part of this touching history is unwritten, because at first all was unseen. As long as the Magdalen remained attached to her disorders, Jesus could only act at a distance. He began this work, like all others, by prayer. Who can say how often during the night upon the mountain-side He repeated the prayer of Esther: *Dona mihi animam meam pro qua rogo,*†

* St. Teresa.

† Esther, vi. 3.

"Give Me this soul which is dear to Me as My own!" Then He undertakes her conquest by some salutary thoughts which He sends into her mind: death, judgment, the abyss of fire and brimstone which awaits souls that are slaves to the flesh. At first, no doubt, Magdalen rejected these ideas, terrible to every one, but especially terrible to a voluptuous heart. She strives to stifle the importunate cry of conscience in fresh excesses. But the Heart of Jesus returns to the charge. His solicitations become more pressing, His voice more imperious, the terrors with which He pursues her more fearful, like the physician who employs steel and fire to drag his patient from the lethargic sleep that would be fatal to him. Mary loses her rest, and wearied at length with this unequal struggle, she abandons her pleasures for some days and seeks retirement.

It was in solitude that the divine Heart awaited her. He represented to her first of all the shame into which she had fallen, she so proud, so vain of her riches, her birth, her beauty, and her wit. She blushed at her extravagances, she blushed at herself. Subsequently He places before her eyes the beauty of the virtue which she had trampled under foot. He caused her to compare the happiness and the satisfaction of a chaste soul with the transports, the suspicions, the jealousies, and bitter deceptions which continually rent her own. At this thought she weeps, tears her hair, and cries out with Job, "Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past?" * Those days when, pure and innocent, I was the joy of my mother and the pride of a virtuous brother.

But this was not all; it was, indeed, *nothing* as yet. She had bemoaned her own proper abasement; it was

* Job, xxix. 2.

necessary that she should mourn the outrage which her sins had committed against God. The Saviour, who in spirit was present at this scene so gratifying to His Sacred Heart, caused the sinner to understand the ingratitude with which she had used against God all the natural gifts which He had lavished upon her. Then, in the most vivid manner, He showed her what God was: that infinite Beauty which she had despised; that essential Goodness to which she had preferred meanest enjoyments, at the remembrance of which she blushed. It was a burning arrow which penetrated within the heart of Magdalen, never more to be withdrawn. Henceforth her eyes are transformed into two founts of tears. An immense and profound sorrow overflows her being. But it is no longer, as of yore, the transport of despair. It was a purifying sorrow, because springing from love ; a calm sorrow, because joined to hope.

But the Heart of Jesus was not yet satisfied. His victory was incomplete. Magdalen had been self-complaisant; she must now humiliate herself. Her sins had been occasion of public scandal; she must make public reparation for them.

Magdalen knew of Jesus, having heard tell of His miracles and His preachings. Assuredly He was one sent from God. He said He was the Saviour promised to Abraham; therefore, He was. She had been told, too, of His goodness and mercy toward sinners. A secret influence of the Sacred Heart ended in inspiring her with a lively faith and a filial confidence in Jesus. She learns that He is seated at the table of a Pharisee of the town, and a secret voice whispers within, *Surge, amica mea*, "Arise, my love, and come!" *Surgam et ibo*, "I will arise and go," she replies. She arises from the place where she had wept, clothes herself in plainer

dress, and goes forth to seek Him who had wounded, and alone could heal her. But custom forbids her to present herself before so great a personage without bringing Him some present. What, then, shall she offer Him? In her grief she has committed to the flames all the vain apparel of luxury, jewels, diamonds, perfumes, —all. Three things only remain—her tears, her lovely hair, and a vase of alabaster filled with a precious essence, which providentially has escaped her holy indignation. She takes the vase, lowers her veil, and repairs to the house of the Pharisee. As they see her pass along, men wonder at the change in her appearance, but they know not that a much greater change has taken place in her heart. She arrives and enters the banquet-room, though uninvited, and despite the custom of the country which disallows females from being present at an ordinary feast. At sight of her the Heart of Jesus is moved. He is startled in the Holy Spirit, and seems to say, "So thou hast come at last!" The other guests are astonished and murmur; but she, without heeding them, goes straight to her Saviour, and throws herself sobbing at His feet. The victory is complete.

See Magdalen now bathing her Saviour's feet with tears! What acts of heroic virtue lie in that single deed! What faith in the divinity of the Son of Man! What humility, what contempt for human respect, what contrition, and, above all, what love! The ancients washed the feet of their guests. Already she has washed the Saviour's feet with her tears. They must now be dried, and it is for this use that she reserves that splendid hair, of which, as late as yesterday, she was so proud, and which she arranged with so much artifice. It was customary to anoint the head of guests

with perfumes. The lowly penitent deems herself unworthy to touch the head of the Lord's Anointed, but she ventures to anoint His feet. She seizes the alabaster-box and breaks it, as grace had broken her heart, and pours out its contents upon those feet where she had found mercy. Then, growing bolder by degrees, she covers them with kisses, waiting till her victor shall avow Himself to be vanquished in His turn, and disarmed by her regrets.

Jesus continued to look upon Magdalen compassionately, still driving deeper into that wounded heart the flaming arrow of love. He permits her to sate herself leisurely with tears and sighs. He takes delight in seeing this precious pearl wash itself from the mire with which it was defiled, to become fit to be one of the most brilliant ornaments of His crown.

The host of Jesus, a haughty Pharisee, regarded Magdalen with contempt and aversion. This touching spectacle, charming even the eyes of the Deity and causing the angels of heaven to rejoice, the sight of a heart broken by repentance, of a guilty soul recovering again in tears righteousness and innocence, was to Simon only an object of scandal. The gentle warmth and bright light flowing at this moment from the divine Heart, far from attracting him to this fireside of love, only served to drive him farther from it. To please him, Jesus should have repulsed the poor sinner with indignation, exclaiming: "Depart from Me, thou art unclean!"* In his bitter zeal he said, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who this woman is that toucheth Him, He would know that she is a sinner."

Thus, then, Thou art no prophet, O Jesus, because Thou permittest sinners to approach Thee! Ah, what

* Isaias, lxv. 5.

had become of us if Thou hadst feared defilement in laying Thy sacred and infinitely pure hands upon our frightful wounds? If the righteous alone were permitted to kiss Thy divine feet; if Thou hadst driven us from Thy presence because we were sinners, to whom could we go?* Who could cleanse us but Thou, and Thou only?† Ah, repeat to this Pharisee what Thou didst answer when accused of being *a friend of sinners:* "I am not come to call the just, but sinners: they that are in health need not a physician."

But Jesus cannot suffer one who so fervently loves Him to be any longer despised, and He will answer out loud the secret accusations of His host.

Jesus.—Simon, I have something to say unto thee.

Simon.—Master, say on.

Oh, yes, speak, good Master, for sure I am that the word that shall issue from Thy lips shall be sweeter than honey. Speak, and let the heavens listen, and the earth keep silence! Listen, sinners, to the voice of your Friend, and ye righteous ones, if any such there be here below, having no need of mercy, interrupt not with your murmurs.

Jesus.—"A certain man had two debtors. One owed him five hundred pence, and the other, fifty."

Ah, my Jesus, I understand. The creditor is none other than Thyself. The debtor for fifty pence was doubtless Simon, and the other righteous ones; for there is none here below but has some account to settle with Thy justice. She who owes five hundred is the Magdalen, but I more than she; it is therefore of me that Thou speakest.

Jesus.—"And as they had nothing to pay with—"

Where should we obtain it, Lord?

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* St. John, vi. 69. † Job, xiv. 4.

Jesus.—"And as they had nothing to pay with, He forgave them both."

Lord, here is what Thou hast done a hundred thousand times in my behalf. But Thou dost not say, O gentle Lamb, how much it cost Thee thus to forgive my debts. The rigid justice of Thy Father made Thee responsible, and Thou didst pay them with the tears of Thy eyes, with the blood of Thy Heart.

Jesus.—"Which of these two debtors will love the creditor more?"

What an unexpected question! What, Lord! will not the righteous, or at least he who has offended Thee less, evidently love Thee more than he who drank iniquity like water? But what does Simon think?

Simon.—"I suppose that he will love him more to whom he forgave more."

Can it be possible? And Thou, my God, what is Thy opinion? If it is really so, make haste and pronounce it, that my happiness may be full.

Jesus.—"Simon, thou hast rightly judged."

O Jesus, it is then true? The sinner, the great sinner, such as the Magdalen, such as I, if he return to Thee, Thou wilt love even more than he who has offended Thee less. O my soul, my sinful soul, glorify the Lord, and rejoice in God thy Saviour. Thanks to Thee, my God,—for myself, and for all other sinners. No, Thou art no prophet, but superior to all the prophets. The prophets had only learned to know that *God hateth the wicked and his wickedness;* that *His eyes are too pure to behold iniquity.* One of them says, *Our God is a devouring fire;* another having written, *Blessed are the righteous,* alarms me with this malediction, *Cursed are the wicked!* Doubtless, they added that God forgave the repentant; but Thou, Thou alone, O Lord, hast pronounced

this astonishing beatitude: "Blessed is the sinner who returns to Me. He will love Me more than the just ones, and he will be loved to such a degree as to excite, if it were possible, the jealousy of the just."*

O my God, forgive my sins, for they are many.† I have greatly offended Thee: forgive me, that I may greatly love Thee. But the Master speaks again: let us listen.

Jesus.—"Dost thou see this woman, whom in your heart you scorn and call a sinner? Her many sins have furnished food for her love, and already she loves Me more than thou dost. I entered into thy house: thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed them in water that love and sorrow have drawn from her heart, in her tears."

Happy tears, which were so employed, tears more precious than the purest dews! And, if I dare say it, happy sins which produced such tears!

"Thou gavest Me no kiss, but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil Thou didst not anoint, but she with ointment hath anointed My feet."

Thus Magdalen loved much because many sins had been pardoned her. But the Saviour finishes His discourse in another manner, to teach us that the remembrance of our sins ought to be not only a breeze that fans our love to flame, but that love is a purifying fire which in an instant can consume our sins, however numerous they may be.

"Wherefore I say to thee, Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."

Ah, how admirably has Magdalen verified Thy delightful parable, Lord. Henceforth she will quit Thee no

* St. Luke, xv. † Psalm, xxiv.

more. She will be Thy handmaiden and minister to Thy wants. She will remain loyal to Thee, even beyond the tomb. Peter may deny Thee, the other apostles fly and leave Thee alone, when besieged by the sorrows and ignominies of Thy passion; but Magdalen will persevere to the last. At the foot of Thy cross Thou wilt see, along with Thy Mother and Thy friend, Magdalen, the penitent sinner. She will be found again weeping at Thy tomb, and will be the first to make known to the new-born Church Thy glorious resurrection, becoming an apostle to the apostles themselves.

Finally, the gentle Saviour, turning toward her says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And as some of the incredulous murmur among themselves, He adds: "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace!"

Returning home, the happy Magdalen would probably express her joy and gratitude in some such terms as these:

"I will sing to Thy name, O Lord, because Thou hast taken me out of the miry pit, the bottomless pit. Thou hast heard the voice of my weeping, and hast comforted me.

"Behold my God and my Saviour! He hath delivered me from the burden of my crimes; and henceforth, freed from all fears, I have but to love Him without end.

"Jesus is my might, and the theme of my praises; Jesus is my salvation!

"Sinners, come to the Heart of Mary's Son! Come, and draw forth waters that will cleanse you from all your defilements, and you will say with me, Praise the Lord; bless His merciful Heart!

"Let the nations know His immense love: tell them that His Heart is full of tenderness toward humbled sinners.

"Sing, sing without ceasing the Heart of Jesus, for He hath had pity upon the vilest of His creatures; He hath surrounded with glory a name lately infamous. Go, repeat it to every sinner upon earth.

"Be glad, O ye sinners! Sing His praises, for in your midst is a Heart ever open to receive you. He hath forgiven Magdalen,—who then can distrust His mercy?"

Affections.

And I, O Lord, shall I remain silent, over whom Thou hast so many times pronounced the sentence of peace and pardon?

Ah, I have been more guilty than Magdalen, yet I love Thee not as she loved Thee.

But at least I love Thee a little, good Lord, and I should seem to lie to my own heart if I were to say that I loved Thee not.

O Jesus, how oft I say to myself, "The days are flying; the years are passing; my life declineth as the shadow; only a few more moments and then the tomb will open for me!"

I then recall my childhood and youth, and at each step I encounter sin, but nowhere good works.

My present life resembles a sandy desert, without a single flower which I may lay upon the altar, or a single fruit which I may offer at the table of my God.

And then my thoughts plunge into the horrible obscurity of the future, and the spirit of despair whispers in mine ear this oracle of the wise man: "The old man will not leave the path of his youth;" thy death will be but the echo of thy life.

I am dragged to the bar of my judge, and there a voice more appalling than the thunder demands what I want.

My heart would reply, "I desire to behold my God," but fright and shame close my lips. Then I throw myself upon my knees and weep.

I weep over my past errors and the barrenness of my life. Left to myself, I drink the bitter cup of my baseness to the very dregs.

Already I hear the muttering of the abyss. The word *hell! hell!* sounds in my ear Despair seizes upon me like a vertigo.

Then I bethink me of Thee, O Jesus, and I say :

It is true I have done nothing to gain heaven; it is true that I have merited hell; it is also true that in a few years I shall appear before my God.

Well, yes, I shall see Him, and that is what I desire. It is after Him that I sigh, it is He that my soul desireth night and day.

Come, O Death, rend asunder the veil that hides from me my Beloved! Break these fetters, that I may cast myself into His arms!

But His justice!—let it strike!—I abandon my whole being to it; but let it strike me there upon the bosom of my God.

O Jesus, others may glory in their works, but I will glory only in the mercies of Thy compassionate Heart!

Practice.

"Who knoweth," asks the wise man, "whether he be worthy of hate or of love?" An excellent means of making sure of salvation is frequently to purify one's conscience, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, by acts of charity and of perfect contrition.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Father, Painted by Himself.

EXPOSITION OF THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

"Let us eat and make merry, because this, my son, was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found."—St. Luke, xv. 23, 24.

THE Psalmist, recalling the graces that Israel had received from God, exclaims, "I will sing of the mercies of God forever." What would he have said had he known as we do the mercies of which the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the source and instrument? Eternity will barely suffice to celebrate them. It will therefore not be superfluous if we add a third chapter on their particular history.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth chapters we have seen what pains the Good Shepherd takes to recall His wandering sheep to the fold, and the sweet welcome which He gives them on their return. In the story of the Prodigal Son we shall see the joy which causes this tender parent to break forth when after a long absence his guilty child throws himself into his arms. It will be Jesus Himself who speaks, and He will paint for us the portrait of His adorable Heart, for here we feel that His tongue will speak of that of which His Heart is full.

Jesus composed this story upon the occasion when the Pharisees reproached Him with being the friend of sinners, receiving them and eating with them.* It is worthy of remark that when they said, "Thou hast a

*St. Luke, xv. 2.

devil," He was content to answer, "I have not a devil." But when they made a crime of His kindness toward sinners, they so wounded the Sacred Heart that He replies upon the spot by three of His most touching parables: those of the lost piece of silver, the strayed sheep, and the Prodigal Son. Let us remark that the complacency with which He develops the latter sufficiently shows us that in composing it His object was less to justify Himself than to inspire sinners with penitence and confidence.

Thus the Sacred Heart, like the rare shrub that yields the balm, allows its precious juice to ooze from all the wounds which it has received, which is alone capable of healing the wounds of our hearts.

The story of the Prodigal is a real drama. In it we see unfolded in the most startling manner the different phases through which a man passes in leaving the light for the darkness, and in returning from the darkness to the light. At the outset, it shows us the man with his passions just awakened, and finding the yoke of the Lord too irksome, turns to creatures. Then follows the picture of the storm into which he casts himself, and the frightful shipwreck in which his dreams of pleasure end—the loss of innocence and grace, mortal sin! In the third place, we have presented to our eyes the sad spectacle of the moral degradation which is the fruit of sin. Fortunately, the very excess of his misery induces the sinner to recollect himself, to regret his former happiness and return to his God. His conversion is then narrated, and brings about the object of the parable, the joy which Jesus experiences. In short, the Saviour, represented by the father of the Prodigal, deigns to explain to the righteous His apparent partiality for converted sinners.

"A certain man had two sons."

These words at once make us anticipate the remainder. These two young people doubtless represent, the one the sinner, the other the just, or at least those whom the Pharisees esteemed as such; and their father is Jesus. He is accused of allowing sinners to participate in His instruction, of eating with them, in a word, of being their guest, their physician and friend; and at the very outset He admits His error, and even exceeds the terms of the accusation by calling Himself their Father. Could He commence His touching defence, or rather, had He any need to continue it? Was not this saying: "You are but the brethren of sinners, and perhaps a little severity on your part may be excusable: but I am their Father; and who will take them if I forsake them?" This was enough for His justification, but for our instruction and consolation something more was needed.

"And the younger said to his father, Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me."

It is then the younger who is to play the part of the sinner. It is he who has received most caresses in the family; he who was preferred by instinct or weakness, from which the best of fathers are not exempt; he in whom probably excessive indulgence had developed the germs of arrogance and independence. The elder is wise, steady, but probably a little cold. The Benjamin is giddy, but doubtless redeems this fault by possessing a better heart. "Wait a little," the father had often replied to the vexation of his censors, "youth will pass; I feel he will become good: he will be the prop of my old age."

Is not this, dear reader, what Jesus would have us understand, by selecting the *younger* as the type of

sinners? Was it not natural that the friend,* the advocate,† the physician‡ of sinners delighted to present them under their best aspect? Man is a child who allows himself to be led by his caprices; rarely is malice the origin of his wanderings.

"And he divided unto them his substance."

This partition denotes that God places in our hands everything necessary to secure our eternal fortunes, leaving us subsequently to profit by it or to abuse it. A beast of burden is chained up, the whip is ever raised over the slave's head, but the child must be free to act.§ His destiny in a certain measure must be the work of his own hands.‖ Without this liberty there is neither dignity, nor merit, nor any claim to glory whatever.

"And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad."

How rich the soul is as it issues from the Saviour's hands, after Baptism, Confirmation, First Communion, and the first few fervent years! But why does this child leave a father whose joy he was, who had favored him, and who would have aided him by his advice to double his inheritance?

Ah, dear reader, have we not here the history of the greater part of young Christians?

Brought up by a pious mother, the child loves Jesus—the child Jesus—without difficulty or effort. His mother has talked to him about Jesus, and the grace of Baptism has germinated in his virgin heart, beneath the sunshine of the maternal smile and the warm breath of her sweet eloquence. His mother tells him Jesus loves him, and cannot he love Jesus? And so he loves Him, and

* St. Matt. xi. 19.
† 1 St. John, ii. 1.
‡ St. Matt. ix. 12.
§ Gal. v.
‖ 2 St. Peter, i.

falls asleep every night after giving his heart to Jesus, and in his very dreams he sees Jesus. In the morning, kneeling at his mother's knee, he repeats his ingenuous prayer to this heavenly Friend. And Jesus, who blessed the pious mothers and their little children, takes him in His arms as the little one who in the Gospel symbolized simplicity, and He repulses those who would snatch him from Him.

Alas! why does the child become a man? Or rather, why is wisdom only the tardy fruit of sad experience? After the years of innocence are over, at that period when the touching graces of early youth begin to give place to a bolder beauty, a transformation not less deep has taken place in the inner man. His soul retires into itself and displays itself no longer in his eyes erst so clear; he becomes absent, dreamy, restless. The caresses of his sisters irritate him, and he no longer seeks those of his mother. It is because sirens have awakened in his heart who slumbered hitherto. They sing, and their perfidious tones plunge him into a kind of intoxication. He perceives outside the every-day world, through the haze of his imagination, as it were the mirage of an enchanted world, and a whole ocean, without a shore or a shoal, of pleasures unalloyed with bitterness, of happiness and love. Soon the paternal roof weighs upon him, the fireside wearies him; he would leap over this narrow horizon which stifles him; he would see the unknown and embrace the infinite. Is not the universe all before him? Are not all human beings like himself tender and loving? The glittering star, the opening rose, the warbling bird, the rising dawn, the dewdrops shining on the grass, all seem to smile upon him. Is it not in honor of his fifteenth birthday that the spring arrays herself in her vesture of

verdure and flowers? This breeze that wafts to him the odors of a thousand flowers, and which awakens in him a thrill never felt before, is it not Nature's first kiss to her young friend? Is it not because she is melancholy that the ring-dove sighs in the forest depths? He imagines that all who surround him are agreed to conceal and hide from him the ideal of which he dreams. He is tired of being treated as a child, he would escape from tutelage and be free. The teaching of his mother, her discreet counsels, the vague alarms of a conscience still delicate, only intensify his thirst to take possession of his existence. Life bubbles over in his veins, a peaceful happiness seems monotonous, he must have fatigue, and adventures—he invokes the tempest! Then Jesus—the child Jesus—begins to appear severe; His look seems too penetrating, even His smile seems bitter, and that hand raised to bless seems now to have a threatening look. He dares no longer give his heart to Jesus each night. Far from taking refuge under the wings of that sweet Friend as heretofore, he dares no longer look at Him, and would, if it were possible, fly from His presence.

Poor child! See you not the serpent twined around the tree with its beautiful fruit? Oh, remain, return to Jesus! He is the God of youth as well as of childhood. He knows what is passing in the heart which His hands have moulded. The infinite which thou seekest unknowingly is HE! In Him thou wilt find thy dreams realized, beauty ever fresh, the holy elation of a boundless love; pleasures without satiety; light without a shadow; wisdom unmixed with error; activity without weariness; life without end. Remain, O fledgling, in the nest where thou wast born; at least wait till thy wings are grown. But no; he wishes to try them.

And this is why, dear reader, we have left our Father, why the Prodigal went "into a far country."

Where is this country? The abode of spirits, says St. Augustine, is God. We may, in like manner, say that the fatherland of faithful souls is the Son of God, the adorable Heart of Jesus. It was in order that we might dwell therein, says St. Bernard, that the Heart of Jesus was not only pierced, but, according to the expression of the Evangelist, *opened*. Therefore, the divine Master tells us: "You are in Me: abide in Me. . . . If you abide in Me, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."* For the rest, as Jesus is in the Father, he that is in Jesus is in the Father, and is in a sense already in heaven by anticipation.† He is a citizen of the eternal sanctuary, fellow-citizen with the angels and the first-born of the New Covenant.‡ To go into a far country, therefore, is to leave the Heart of Jesus, to wander in the paths of sin. It is to cease to walk under the shadow and the eye of Jesus, in order to sin more at ease; in one word, it is to abandon Jesus for creatures. The miser's heart is in the coffer that contains his gold, that of the voluptuary is in the mire.

"And there wasted his substance in living riotously."

Thus, in a few years, he had consumed in pleasures, in feasting, in feeding vile flatterers,—as the wise man says, giving his substance to the cruel,§—the money his father and his ancestors had amassed by unremitting toil, enduring the heat by day and the cold by night. Ah, with what ease, what inconsiderateness we dissipate the heritage that our Father has left us! The kingdom of heaven, the fertile field cleared by the patriarchs, the prophets, the righteous of ancient days,‖

* St. John, xv. 7. † Eph. ii. ‡ Heb. xii.
§ Proverbs, v. 9. ‖ St. John, iv.

and fertilized at last by the sweat and the blood of the God-man,—that pearl of great price, that hidden treasure* for which Jesus gave up everything, even His life; those heavenly mansions once shut to us, but whose portals the cross has opened; the title-deeds of our divine adoption,—all, all surrendered for enjoyments as fleeting as the songs and laughter of the Prodigal's unworthy friends; as frail as the chaplets of flowers with which they crowned themselves; as transitory as the fumes of their drunken debauch.

"And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want."

Great God! how could other than famine reign in the country of sin? The soil, accursed of God, yields brilliant fruits, but they are like those of Sodom, which contain but dust and ashes. They drink that wine which is "the gall of dragons and the venom of asps," † and in the inebriation produced by this bitter draught one may well, as the prophet says, dream that he eateth, to find on awaking that his hunger has only increased.‡ O man! why seek thy food there? thou who art admitted to be the fellow-guest of angels. Can the palm flourish beneath the skies of the frozen north? Thy soul—that heavenly plant—must draw its sustenance, its life, from the bosom of God, from the Heart of the Son of God. Everywhere else it is exiled from home, and can but wither.

But what is to become of this poor child? Will he quit this thankless soil? Will he return home, and throw himself at his Father's feet?

Not yet. He must first go to the very end of the fatal road on which he has imprudently started, because

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* St. Matt. xiii. † Deut. xxxii. 33. ‡ Isaias, xxix.

man, though he falls into sin of himself, cannot extricate himself. The compassionate hand of the Saviour must search for him at the very bottom of the pit of ruin, twining around him those mysterious bonds which we call grace, and so raise him and drag him out of the infected mire, as the helpful Ethiopian dragged up Jeremias from the cistern.* But if grace is indispensable to the sinner to enable him to escape from his condition, God wills that the sinner should co-operate with grace, at least by consent, by accepting freely and voluntarily the help which is offered him. And to this end it is often needful that God should allow him to get down very low, in order that, alarmed at his misery, the poor captive may lift his eyes to heaven, and cry: "Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice."† Our divine Lord continues:

"And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him."

Unhappy man! do you perceive now what a hard and bitter thing it was to quit your father? O sinner, but yesterday the child of God, behold thyself now a slave of the most pitiless of masters! If he would only feed thee as a slave is fed,—but he thinks only of humbling thee, of degrading thee, of putting thee upon a par (what am I saying?)—putting thee below the level of the vilest of animals, that he may more effectually strike at the Heart of Him whose image thou art, and whose sworn foe he is. He envied thee when he saw thee recently fill that place at God's table

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* Jeremias, xxxviii. † Psalm, cxxix, 1, 2.

which he had forfeited, and now he triumphs in beholding thee beg whatever he may throw to thee to fill the void in thy heart. A child of God, whom Jesus has fed with His own flesh, reduced to wrangle! O Jesus! my pen recoils again before this comparison, as before a blasphemy, and yet, Lord, Thou hast said it. Thou hast said that he coveted the husks of the swine!

"And returning to himself, he said, How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up he came to his father."

Let us admire here the mercifulness of the Heart of Jesus. The sinner has committed against Him the most outrageous affront. He has likened Him to creatures, and given them the preference He tore himself violently from the arms of a loving Father. He has defiled that soul which Jesus loved more than His own life. He made himself a servant to the foes of Jesus. And now, why does he think of returning to Him? Is it because he desires to console Him by making reparation for his faults? No, because he is disenchanted and unhappy. And will Jesus receive him? Doubtless, only after some long penance; He will make him expiate his years of absence and contempt by as many years of refusal and disdain. And in any case, He will no longer permit this degraded one to call Him Father, or to sit at His table. The ingrate may congratulate himself that he is allowed to gather up with the dogs the crumbs that fall from the children's table,* or, at

* St. Matt. xv. 26.

most, to take his place at that of the slaves. This is what we shall presently see.

The Prodigal is already far from the scene of his crimes and his shame. He thinks only of his father. He pictures him to himself, so kind and generous, even toward strangers. He recalls, with emotion, his caresses, his preference for him—so ill requited, alas! —and his tears and touching remonstrances on the fatal day of separation; and a true and sincere repentance springs to life in this guilty heart.

Let us for a moment lose sight of the fact that the Prodigal is none other than ourselves, and that the father is Jesus. Let us think only of studying this picture of the mercies of the Heart of Jesus, traced from nature by Jesus Himself. It is so transparent that the reality appears without difficulty. While, therefore, the poor child, weakened by want, walks, or rather limps painfully forward, let us transport ourselves to the father's side, and mark what effect the first glimpse of such a son will produce upon him, and if he will recognize him.

Here he is, just issuing forth from his vast and beautiful home. He is an old man of noble and kindly presence, but you may perceive that long cares have undermined him far more than years. He advances, leaning upon the traditional patriarchal staff,* and visits the numerous servants he has in the fields. Does he, like Jacob, wish to satisfy himself that the flocks are in good condition,† or will he give some orders? He does not quite know himself what it is that induces him to come out. He is sadder than usual. He saw his child in a dream,—but in what condition! He will seat himself

* Gen. xxxii. † Gen. xxxvii.

for the thousandth time on the spot where that much-lamented son received his last kiss. To those who passing wish him the oriental salutation, "Be thou always in joy," he replies, like Tobias, with a sigh, "What joy is there remaining to me, seeing I have lost the light of mine eyes?" And while speaking he casts longing looks over the plain, his eye plunges into the distance as far as the spot where the horizon floats indistinct between the desert sands, and the blue of heaven is gilded by the last rays of expiring day. Suddenly he is silent. His eyes sparkle, the color darts into his pale face, his heart beats quicker. He leans forward as if to bring himself nearer to the far-off object of his feverish attention. It is a poor traveller, a kind of beggar in rags, hidden a moment since by a clump of sycamores, and who presently approaches with naked feet and a hesitant and timid air. The herdsmen are surprised that the sight of this poor wretch so deeply preoccupies their master. "Master, who is that man; do you recognize him so far away?" But the master no longer hears. Motionless, scarce daring to breathe, he is all eyes, and hope and fear paint themselves vividly on his countenance. At last he doubts no longer, his presentiments are true, he has recognized him, and an immense compassion has stirred his bowels. "It is he!" he cries, and his staff drops from his hands. He needs it no longer, he has regained the vigor of youth, and runs to meet the mysterious traveller. Behold him running, quite breathless, his arms stretched out before him. The servants look on in amazement, and fear that his long troubles have at length weakened his reason, for they are far from recognizing their lord's son in this guise,—they possessed not the eyes of the heart! Besides, what likelihood was there that that youth, so haughty and rich

when he left, should be reduced to such misery? Probably he was long since dead. But supposing it was he, ought not his father to be ashamed of him? Ought he not to repulse an ingrate who had allowed so good a father to grow old with anxiety, without once sending to inquire after his health, and who only returns at length because he is ruined, most likely by his debauchery? So thought the hired servants; but the father had divined all at the first glance, for alas! he had foreseen all. But he has also already pardoned all, and only recollects one sole fact: this poor mendicant, pale with hunger, emaciated with misery, barely covered in frightful tatters, is his son. See, while the herdsmen murmur among themselves, he has reached the unfortunate. He falls upon his neck, strains him in his arms, covers him with his mantle, kisses him, bedews him with his tears. "My son, my poor child!" and he can say no more.

"And when he was yet a great way off," says the Lord Jesus, "his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him."

Nevertheless, the Prodigal fell on his knees, exclaiming, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not now worthy to be called thy son." These words crown the emotion of the good old man; he will not allow him to finish his sentence, but addressing his servants who have run to see what all this means, he says:

"Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead

and is come to life again; was lost and is found. And they began to be merry."

O Jesus, how gentle is Thy spirit!* If I ever, as I hope, arrive at the port of safety, truly Thy mercies shall be the eternal theme of my song. For it is Thyself, O Lord, that Thou hast depicted under the traits of this tender father. And who but Thyself, O Jesus, were it even my own father, would welcome me like this, if I had been as culpable toward him as I have been toward Thee?

I have despised Thee, and fled far from Thee, seeking my happiness in miserable creatures. I have given them that heart which Thou demandest with so much urgency, that evidently Thou regardest it as a treasure.

And Thou, O Jesus, instead of being irritated at such an outrage, instead of disinheriting me and forever renouncing me, effacing me from Thy paternal memory, groanest over my unhappiness as if I were Thine only child, and the eyes of Thine Heart were riveted upon the road by which I stole away from Thy gaze.

And when harassed by misery, weary of the shameful yoke I bore, and preferring at length my Father's house to the servitude of Satan, I decided to return.

When I appeared before Thee, impoverished, languishing, dying of hunger, defiled, degraded, infamous, an object of disgust to the angels, of derision even to devils, Thou didst not repulse me with horror, nor blush to behold me.

What do I say?—as far off as Thou didst see me, O Jesus, O my life, O my delight, Thou didst feel Thy bowels moved, and Thy compassionate Heart flew to meet me.

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* Wisdom, xii. 1.

Ashamed of myself, I dared not approach Thee; weak, I could not have dragged myself as far as to Thee; guilty, I dreaded to receive my merited punishment.

And beholding my hesitation, my fears, my helplessness, and unable to endure any further delay, Thou didst run, O Jesus, to meet me. Thou didst embrace me ere I could prostrate myself at Thy feet. Thou didst call me Thy son ere I could say "Father;" and the avowal of my crime was not completed ere Thou didst cast the mantle of Thy righteousness over my shoulders, naked and branded with the marks of the most abject bondage.

And Thou hast restored to me the robe made white in Thy blood; the ring of betrothal, and the shoes of peace; and hast manifested Thy joy before the astonished angels; Thou didst even command the princes of Thy court with their own hands to prepare a banquet, and join in a feast of which I was the hero.

And while they made the arch of heaven resound with their joyous songs, and the melodious music of their golden lyres, Thou didst press Thine Heart to mine, and say things which I can find no words to repeat.

In short, Thou hast treated me with a favor apparently so partial that the just almost demanded whether the way to merit Thy caresses was by offending Thee!

It is to this question that Jesus replies in the latter part of the parable. He is the Father of the two sons, you remember. Now at the moment when the Prodigal arrived, the elder son was far away from the house, and in his joy the happy father had not thought of informing him. And now that his friends, his neighbors, and his servants are seated at the banqueting table, his eyes and his heart are so full of his dear *risen one*, that he does not notice the vacant place at his side.

It is because there is no longer an empty place in his heart: the return of his poor child has filled it at this moment entirely.

But night has come, and the elder son returns from the fields with his tired oxen. Jesus continues:

"When he drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing."

He was at first surprised, for it was not a festival, and since the departure of his brother the father had no longer gathered his friends around his board. Here is the remainder of the sacred narrative:

"And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him: Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. But he was angry and would not go in. His father, therefore, coming out, began to entreat him. And he, answering, said to his father: Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment; and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him: Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it was fit that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is come to life again: he was lost and is found."

Such, dear reader, is the portrait which Jesus has left us of His own Heart. It is the most touching parable in the Gospels, and it is also the longest and most detailed. One feels that Jesus dwelt upon a subject which was a favorite one with Him and the proper element of His loving Heart. But have you observed one single word of reproach addressed to the sinner in this

remarkable story? Did the father demand an account of his heritage so miserably squandered? Did he make his son feel the magnitude of his faults, or tell him how good he was to receive him at all? No, there is not the smallest word, not the slightest trace of indignation. The father received his guilty son with the same joy as old Tobias received, after long absence, the best of sons who brought back to him with his treasures, joy, happiness, and the light of day. One would think that he was the obliged party.

I have said that there is not the slightest trace of indignation, but I am in error. On reading the story of the Prodigal's misfortunes, one feels that the divine Historian is aroused against the barbarous master of this unfortunate, and that indignation alone could inspire the energetic terms with which He depicts the cruelty of Satan. For Jesus knew as well as the Pharisees the holy wrath of zeal, but He reserved its expression for the scandalous* and the hypocrites,† for obstinate sinners,‡ for the sacrilegious,§ for blasphemers against the Holy Ghost,‖ for the incredulous,¶ for hearts devoid of compassion,** and for the enemy of souls.

As for humble and contrite sinners, he has nothing for them but gentleness. He believes that their known and avowed misery, their sincere return to Him, with submission to His justice, are sufficient reparation for the injury that He has received. He hastens to cover up the past under the veil of His mercy, and to efface its traces in His precious blood.

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* St. Matt. xviii. † St. Matt. xxiii. ‡ *Ibid.*
§ St. Matt. xxi. ‖ St. Matt. xii. ¶ St. Matt. xvi.
** St. Matt. xviii and xxv.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Poor God.

JESUS CONSIDERED IN THE PERSON OF THE POOR.—JESUS POOR IN THE EUCHARIST.—MARY MAGDALEN AND JUDAS.

> "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich."—2 Cor. viii. 9.

THE Heart of Jesus wished, for love of us, to be drenched with every humiliation that can afflict human life. He did not spare Himself the misfortune which worldlings dread most. I mean *poverty—indigence* properly so called. I am a poor beggar, * He had said by the mouth of the Psalmist. And it was in the name of our Lord's holy poverty that St. Paul pleaded with the faithful at Corinth to succor the poor at Jerusalem. "You know," he wrote, "that our Lord Jesus Christ being rich became poor for your sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich." † He was poor in all the hard meaning of the word. His mother Mary—who was one day to behold heaven and earth at her feet—was poor. Joseph, the admirable Joseph, the spouse of Mary, the representative of the Eternal Father, the foster-father of Jesus, was a poor artisan of Nazareth. And Jesus Himself, the Heir of the universe,‡ was born in a state of almost unparalleled destitution. Up to the

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* Psalm, xxix. † 2 Cor. viii. ‡ Heb. i.

age of thirty He followed the trade of Joseph, for His fellow-citizens called Him *faber*, that is, the working-man, the carpenter. During His public life, being unable any longer to live by His handiwork, He was reduced to live upon alms. Mary Magdalen, Joanna, wife of Chusa, Susanna, and some others, ministered to His wants and those of His mother and disciples.*

Ah, if "it is more blessed to give rather than to receive," as St. Paul tells us after learning it from the divine Master Himself,† what a happiness it must have been to bestow alms upon the Creator, the Restorer of the world! Who of us would not have gladly given his daily bread to the Son of Him who each day gives us our own? Who would not have furnished the aliments destined by the work of nutrition to be transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ, as the bread upon our altars is transformed into the same flesh and blood at the words of consecration? Happy women, yea, a thousand times happy, may ye be blessed! Ye have a sacred claim upon the gratitude of the Church, whose Bridegroom ye sustained during the days of His poverty.

Faithful soul, you too may partake of this honor and glory with Magdalen, and Joanna, and Susanna. For Jesus is still poor and indigent. Do not hastily accuse me of subtlety: I shall let Jesus Himself explain this mystery. I entreat you to listen with profound respect to the language of the Word Himself. And recollect, when this Master speaks, all men are compelled to believe, and to suspect Him of exaggeration would simply be sacrilege. Open then thy heart, and deeply engrave upon it these teachings, issuing from the Heart

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* St. Luke, viii. 3. † Acts, xx. 35.

of God, touching as they do the very bowels of Christendom and embracing it wholly.

"When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty: and all nations shall be gathered before Him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in: naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came to Me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee: thirsty, and gave Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and covered Thee? Or when did we see Thee sick, or in prison, and came to Thee? And the King answering, shall say to them: Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, *you did it to Me*. Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me not in: naked, and you covered Me not: sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then they also shall answer Him, saying: Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee? Then He

shall answer them, saying: As long as you did it not to one of these least, *neither did you do it to Me.*" *

You will not be displeased with me, I hope, O Christian soul, for placing under your eyes this majestic scene, this tremendous separation, and causing to echo in your ears those two sentences—the last which shall ever be pronounced. May you be of the number of those to whom the first shall be addressed. God preserve you from being blasted by the second!

But observe Jesus does not say *the poor* have been hungry, but "*I* was hungry." He is in the poor, He suffers hunger and thirst in the poor. Certainly, if a mere man had said it, we should regard it only as a rhetorical figure or a pious exaggeration. But here there is neither exaggeration nor metaphor, but a mystery as real as profound, and which we constantly meet in the inspired writings of St. Paul. We are members of a body of which Jesus is the Head, and which is *personified* in Him. "As the body is one and hath many members, so also is Christ." † So says the Apostle. He calls *Christ* the body of the Church, having Christ for its Head. Now we place all ailments to the account of the person, and not to that of the member affected. *I have a headache*, not *my arm* or *my head* aches. So Jesus says, *I am hungry*, *I am thirsty*, and He really has hunger and thirst when His members, the poor, suffer them. Reflect carefully upon this astonishing apotheosis of the poor, and you will perceive new horizons opening to your gaze. You will understand better the admirable plan of the Gospel, and you will recognize that the happiest of republics would be that which would adopt it as its exclusive code of laws. If you are poor, you may glory

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* St. Matt. xxv. 31 to 45. † 1 Cor. xii. 12.

in your elevation.* If, on the contrary, you are rich, you will understand what it is to be poor. Beneath those rags that once made you shudder you will discern rays of mysterious light, and you will understand why St. Louis, King of France, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and many other illustrious personages have served the poor with their own hands, on bended knee washing their feet, and salving their wounds. You will say to yourselves, "In reality this is, after all, but faith, and to live by faith is but the alphabet of the Christian." †

Thus you have no need to envy Magdalen and her holy companions. Jesus is still in our midst. He is wherever a human being suffers. He is in the orphan who stretches out to you a suppliant hand, in the widow who weeps, in the blind man telling his beads by the wayside, in the sick man groaning on his couch of pain, in the maiden whose virtuous innocence struggles daily with privations.

But there is also another presence of our Saviour in our midst, and it is the most precious of all. I speak of the life of His Heart, of His love. This life was the sole cause of His natural life, of His poverty, and His humiliations. Begun in the consecrated womb of the Virgin, continued in the manger and in Joseph's workshop, and consummated upon the cross, it perpetuates itself for us in the adorable Eucharist. This wholly inner life is made appreciable to us through the sacramental species, and through the holy ceremonies of the Sacrifice of the Mass. We are therefore bound to honor it, not only in the bottom of our hearts, but also in an outward and visible manner, to give our alms to Jesus in the Eucharist, often so very poor. Here also we may find a pattern in Mary Magdalen. Here again we

* St. James, i. 9. † Heb. xi.

find this blessed woman brightening our path,—this convert who by the strength of her love leaves many innocent souls a long way behind her.

It was six days before the Passover, before the institution of the Eucharist, consequently seven days before our Saviour's death. Before undertaking His supreme labors, He desired for the last time to enjoy a moment's repose in the bosom of friendship, and bid farewell to those whom He had loved so well. He repaired to Bethania.

"And they made Him a supper there, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that were at table with Him. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of right spikenard, of great price, and" (having broken the alabaster box which held it) "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, he that was about to betray Him, said: Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"*

Pious souls, you have seen the Magdalen at work, and you have listened to the words of Judas. You have seen on the one hand, friendship, gratitude, simple and enthusiastic piety, on the other, prudence, sagacity, economy. To which side does your heart incline? But what am I saying? I do you wrong! Who would resemble Judas even ever so slightly? But for more security let us take the Lord's opinion.

"Jesus therefore said: Let her alone, why do you molest her? She hath wrought a good work upon Me. For the poor you have always with you, and whensoever you will, you may do them good: but Me you have not always. What she had, she hath done: she

*St. John, xii. 2 to 5; St. Mark, xiv. 5.

is come beforehand to anoint My body for the burial. Amen I say to you: wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her."

You perceive, friend of the Sacred Heart, Jesus has pronounced as your own heart dictated.

Ah, how much more clear-sighted is that simple piety which the world likes to call *superstition and fanaticism*, compared with that which it loves to adorn with the name of *enlightened piety!*

Still, if Judas had been less wicked, his idea might have been found wonderful. Jesus had no need of this perfume. This profusion was in no way useful to His corporeal existence, and if it had been requisite all the balm of Galaad belonged to Him. On the other hand, His suffering members, the poor, might have profited by it. So according to the calculation of Judas, it was *so much* for the broken alabaster box, and *so much* for the spikenard, three hundred pence lost. With this considerable sum, how many indigent persons might have been relieved!

It would have been an ordinary good work. The Magdalen follows the promptings of her grateful heart, and she does that which neither Peter nor even John had dreamed of doing. She embalmed beforehand the feet at which she had found mercy, and until the end of time *what she did will be related.* The words of Judas, the frightful *Quare non venit?* "Why was it not sold?" will remain also, to his disgrace.

Besides, the Evangelist remarks that this excellent manager, this friend of the poor, was only at bottom a thief, who wanted to turn to his own advantage a part of the price of the perfume. Frustrated in his expectations, he thinks only how to indemnify himself by another

sale, that of his Master Himself, and he goes out at once to place a price on Him.

And now, let us say with a sigh, there are still Christians who speak like Judas, and regard as wasted that which is bestowed in honor of the body of Jesus in our churches. Others there are who do not go so far as to grumble, but while dwelling in sumptuous palaces, and clad in the richest stuff, feel no shame at seeing the Master of the universe lodged only a few paces off in some dilapidated hut, and allow the holy mysteries to be celebrated with ornaments stained or worn by too long use. Christian ladies who make it a point of duty to assist each day at the Holy Sacrifice, who receive each week or each month into your hearts this so bountiful God, what splendid ornaments might be made from the robes which you trail for a single day in the mire of the streets, only subsequently to heap them together, and deliver them to the moth. Is not this a case of which to say, "Why this waste?" And then, what are the occupations of your leisure moments? Is not work too frequently for you a pastime, a means of diversion? What hinders you then at such times from employing the ingenious ability of your hands in the service of the altar? Once again, why this waste of time?

So then, let us give with a good heart to Jesus indigent in His suffering members. But let us give also to Jesus indigent in the Holy Eucharist, in the chiefest mystery of His Heart. He accepts all things, especially when one gives according to his means. The cup of cold water given in His name to a disciple shall not remain unrecompensed.* And the mite given by the poor widow for the maintenance of the temple is of more value in His eyes than all the treasures of the rich.†

* St. Matt. x. 42. † St. Mark, xii. 43.

*Affections and Prayer.**

When I behold Thee so poor, O Jesus, I know not how to express the feelings of my heart, but I cannot separate myself from Thee. There is in Thy poverty a grandeur and a charm which ravish my soul. Grant, O my God, that I may love Thee as much as I ought. All those things of which Thou hast deprived Thyself only serve to impoverish those who cling to them; and those who despise them Thou crownest with veritable good, and a most enduring consolation. When, O my God and my portion, will that happy moment come, when, far from all the joys of the world, satisfied alone with Thee, and plunged into the riches of which Thy Heart is an ocean, I shall be able to say to Thee in the transport of my love and gratitude: "Thou art my treasure, my rest, my beatitude." Away from me, O world, and thy transitory riches! Let me embrace Jesus, poor, abject, and despised. O Jesus! O my love! O my life! O my all!

Practice.

Enroll yourself in the *Association of Poor Churches*, and seek to attract fresh members. Take care that your parish church possesses at least decent ornaments, and that the linen is always of irreproachable whiteness.

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* Taken from the work of Father Thomas of Jesus.

CHAPTER XX.

The Man of Desires.

EXPOSITION OF THE WORDS: "COME TO ME, ALL YOU THAT LABOR AND ARE BURDENED, AND I WILL REFRESH YOU."

"Thou man of desires."—Dan. x. 11.

"For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."—St. Matt. vi. 21.

Among all the affections which made the Heart of Jesus beat with anxious care during His life on earth there is probably none more touching or worthy of study than His wishes, His desires, His longings. We may define a desire, an ardent wish, to be the search after a beloved object, or, adopting our Saviour's idea, the flight of a heart toward its treasure. Did not the Prophet's heart fly to God when he cried out: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God: when shall I come and appear before the face of God? . . . Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest! . . . For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest where she may lay her young ones. Thy altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!"

This sufficiently proves that a wish is decidedly only *love*. But it is love under the most tangible and, as we said just now, the most touching form. You have read the charming story of Tobias, and at what part

did your tears bedew the sacred page? Was it when the saintly old man passed his peaceful days on the arms of his grand-nephews, or was it when he begs of God with prayers and tears to grant him the return of his only son, or when he is at length informed of that dear son's return by the joyous barkings of the dog, and guided by this faithful animal, the poor blind man runs out, feeling his way, and stumbling over every stone in his path, to open his arms to receive him whom he can no longer behold?

Now, if it be correct to define desires as the principle of activity in all sensible beings, the origin of all their changes of place, and of all their actions, we may apply to Jesus the name which the angel gave to Daniel, and call Him pre-eminently "*the Man of Desires.*" For by the greatness of the effect we may judge of the power of the cause.

The traveller arriving at the foot of the Pyramids, stops, and looking upon them with astonishment exclaims, "What force must have been required to raise and place these masses of stone!" So, when we contemplate the manger of the Nativity, the pillar of the Flagellation, the cross of punishment, the tabernacle of the Law of Love, we are constrained to say to ourselves, "What a wish He had to make us happy!"

All the facts which we have studied up till now are the manifestations of the wishes of Jesus. But in this chapter we will consider those wishes, no longer in their effects, but in themselves, at the moment when they were conceived, at the moment when, like pinions of fire, they transported this adorable Heart where its treasure lay, at the moment when, like old Tobias, Jesus held out to us His divine arms, calling us, and urging us to come and rest upon His bosom,

and so satisfy His immense tenderness. We shall no longer dwell on the burning words of a man thirsting to behold his God, but the not less ardent words of a God thirsting to be loved of men, to unite Himself to them, and to demonstrate His love toward them.

It was during His apostolic journeys. The world appeared to Him like a field covered with harvests already whitening,* and He had sent forth the Twelve, to whom seventy other co-operators were added, that they might gather in this precious wheat sown with so much pain by the ancient prophets. On the evening of their first day's labor, the seventy returned filled with joy, and related to the Master all that they had been enabled to do in His name. Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit,† like the head of a family when he beholds his reapers cutting the ears of corn, binding them together and heaping sheaf upon sheaf.

But soon an afflicting thought succeeds these more pleasant ones, a thought which lacerates the Shepherd's heart. His mission was not limited to the confines of Judæa. Doubtless He had been sent to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel,"‡ but the "Israel of God"§ comprises not only those who were born of Jacob after the flesh, but all those who by faith were to participate in the promises made to that patriarch. All peoples in all time had been given Him as a heritage. The glance of His sublime intelligence embraced the entire universe in all the epochs of the future. He beholds all His sheep; He knows their number; He knows each one by name. He not only loves those whose salvation He has foreseen from all eternity,—He loves all without exception, and desires to save all. He wills

* St. John, iv. 35.
† St. Luke, x.
‡ St. Matt. xv. 24.
§ Gal. vi. 16.

to die for all, and to feed them all with His very substance.

But alas! how small is the number of those who listen to His voice, and walk in the paths of peace! How far off from Him are the remainder and how unhappy they are! He sees them here led by mercenaries who, satisfied with despoiling them of their fleece, flee at the approach of the wolf. There, they are the prey of robbers who slaughter them. At all times and in all places He beholds this poor flock pay a fearful tribute to a perfidious enemy, who leads the poor sheep by a flowery path to an abyss from which it is impossible to draw them. How are they to be rescued from so many cruel and unworthy hands, and all gathered together under His crook? If a single one strays, He leaves the rest in the wilderness, and goes out to seek it in ravines, over hills, among the thickest bushes, until He finds it and brings it back on His shoulders.* But what can be done when the whole troop is dispersed?

Here the Good Shepherd's Heart experiences that emotion to which St. Paul alludes when he says to his dear Philippians: "I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." This divine Heart divides itself to fly wherever its treasure lies. So to speak, it tears itself into as many portions as there are, and shall ever be, souls here below. Like the bird that sees her young ones pursued by the hawk, He raises a cry of distress and alarm, and He would have this cry borne upon the four winds of heaven to the extremities of the world, repeated by all the echoes of earth and ocean, and prolonging itself till it reaches the threshold of eternity. What does he say? What is this cry that issues from His too full Heart? "Come unto Me, all ye that labor

* St. Luke, xv. 4, 5.

and are burdened, and I will refresh you."* Let us carefully study these sacred words: they are so many fiery arrows destined to kindle our hearts.

"Come unto Me!" Why does He not say to us, "Go to My disciples," since He had conferred upon them all His powers, commanding them to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and to raise the dead? Because He would not have us stop at His disciples, but that the disciples should conduct us to Him. The Heart of Jesus possesses all the instincts of a mother's heart. Will any mother worthy of the name lay upon another the care of her babe? If it is hungry or thirsty, will she confide it to the bosom of a paid nurse? If it weeps or suffers, does she send it to a female servant? No, she deems that no one can solace it like herself, and that in respect of her child the hearts of ten thousand servants are not equal to her own. She deems that from her arms, her bosom, her lips, escapes I know not what sympathetic fluid which will circulate in the limbs of her son, and which would be lacking in a stranger. And then, far from dreading fatigue, she is jealous of her maternal cares. She grudges all the kisses bestowed by another upon her treasure. See how she presses it to her heart, how she devours it with her eyes, how she pours out her soul through all its senses, how she knows how to soothe, to warm it, to coax, to put it to sleep! Looking at her, you find it difficult to decide whether she wants to console it, or satisfy her own passion, if it is he who needs her, or she that needs him. Who receives most pleasure, the infant at the caresses he receives from his mother, or the mother at the caresses she lavishes on her child?

Hence it is a kind of necessity to Jesus to draw us to

* St. Matt. xi. 28.

Himself, to take us in His arms, to press us to His Heart, to make its vital warmth pass into our own, together with that virtue that proceeds from Him and heals all that touch Him.* Far from wishing to lay the care of our souls upon another as a burden He is jealous of this care as a relief to Himself. His bosom is filled with a spiritual milk whose superabundance fatigues Him. His Heart is in a manner swollen with the mystic perfumed cordial of His exuberant tenderness.† It is like new wine fermenting in a frail vessel, and which seeks an outlet.‡ This is why He seeks for hearts into which to pour His own, and like the Sunamite widow exclaims, "Bring me yet a vessel." §

Will you say, dear reader, that our expressions are exaggerated, and that we give ourselves up to the flights of imagination? I would refer you to the sacred writings, and beg you to reply to the following questions.

If Jesus does not burn to impart to us the superabundance of the good treasure hidden in His Heart, ‖ what signifies this pressing apostrophe which He has dictated to Isaias?

"All you that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth you not? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted in fatness. Incline your ear and come to me: hear, and your soul shall live." ¶

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* St. Luke, vi. 19.
† Canticles, i.
‡ Job, xxxii. 19.
§ 4 Kings, iv. 6.
‖ St. Matt. xii.
¶ Isaias, lv. 1, 2, 3.

And that you may be assured that it was certainly He who spake thus by the mouth of the prophet, here, according to St. John, is what He said, crying in the midst of the crowd which filled the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," and, as the Scripture saith, "rivers of living water shall flow out of His bowels."*

If we have exaggerated in applying the word *excessive* to His tenderness for our souls, what word will you apply to that which presided at the mystery of Calvary?

Jesus Himself says that the utmost limit which love can reach is to give one's life for a friend.† But would not that be an excess if one consented to die for his enemy? And what would it be, if he consented to die in the most frightful torments, by an infamous execution? And what would it be, in short, if this cruel and ignominious death, endured not for friends, but for enemies, had been longed for and expected as the happiest day of his life? Listen: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"‡

If it is not a kind of relief to Jesus to take us in His arms (spiritually, of course), to press us to His Heart, to warm us, to communicate to us His divine life with His own substance, to suckle us after a manner, and crown all our desires, why did He, when seated at the table where for the first time He was about to unite Himself to us by giving us His flesh and blood,—why did He allow that sigh to escape Him, the sigh of a man who has attained to his crowning wish: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you"? Why, on

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* St. John, vii. 37, 38 † St. John, xv. 13.

‡ St. Luke, xii. 50.

this solemn occasion, did He allow His youngest disciple to repose upon His bosom, who there, as upon Calvary, doubtless represented humanity? And what was that golden girdle which St. John saw, and which, instead of being worn round the waist, according to the precept of the Old Testament, was girt about the breast?* Does not this figure clearly tell us that the milk of His kindness overflows, that He has to do Himself violence to contain it while awaiting His children, and that we relieve Him by drawing more abundantly from His Heart this divine cordial which was made for us?

In short, if we have transgressed the bounds of truth and of the respect due to the Son of God, in comparing Him to an impassioned mother who finds her joy, a sweet and holy delight in embracing and caressing her child, what say you, dear reader, to this passage from the greatest of the prophets, or, as He has been called, the Fifth Evangelist?

"I will bring upon her," (the Church) "as it were, a river of peace. You shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you. You shall see and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb."†

But let us return to our subject.

"Come all to Me!" O charity! Do you see this heart of God dilating to receive all the unhappy children of Adam?‡ Do you see Jesus extending the wings of His loving kindness to the very ends of the earth,

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* Exodus, xii.; St. Luke, xii.; Apoc. i. † Isaias, lxvi. 12 to 14.
‡ Deut. xxxii.

and inviting us to take refuge beneath their shadow?* "Come all." However numerous you may be, you will not be straitened for room in My Heart.† Fear not to importune Me. I came for the express object of gathering together all the children of God that are scattered,‡ and the express will of My Father is that I reject none that come unto Me.

"Ye that labor and are burdened."

Not only does He call sinners as well as the righteous, but it is to sinners that He specially addresses Himself. For the just, says Isaias, walk by straight and easy paths, § or they fly like the eagle and are not weary.‖ Or rather He does not call the just,¶ for they already rest beneath the shadow of His wings.** But it is we sinners whom He specially calls;—we who are far off from Him in quitting the paths of truth;—we who have walked in difficult ways and are tired in the dark paths of iniquity.†† It is we who carry a load upon our shoulders,—and is there any load so oppressive as sin?

Admire here the affection of Jesus, and the desire He has to attract us to Himself. Look at all the methods which He employs to induce us to throw ourselves into His arms.

First, He causes us to see our need of Him. The misfortune of sin is that it makes us ignorant of our misery. We are like a man in delirium escaped from his keepers, who imagines himself strong, although he has scarcely a breath of life. What does Jesus do? He shows us our weakness, that we may feel the necessity of leaning upon Him. He shows us our wounds,

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* Psalm, lvi. 2.
‡ St. John, xi. 52.
‖ Isaias, xl. 31.
** Psalm, xxxv. 8.
† 2 Cor. vi. 12.
§ Isaias, xxvi. 7.
¶ St. Matt. ix. 13.
†† Wisdom, v. 7.

that we may hasten to our charitable Physician. "Come," He says, "Come to Me! Let Me take off this burden beneath which you succumb. I will take it upon Myself, for I am the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world, and My Father willeth that I should take upon My shoulders the sins and infirmities of all. Cease to run in this baneful way, see, your naked feet are bleeding from its briars.* Come and rest until the day shall break,† and I will lead you into the paths of peace. A feverish thirst devours you, and you fly to the torrent of Egypt and the river of Babylon.‡ Go not, it is a troubled water which will only augment your thirst. Rather come to Me, and I will give you water that will forever quench your thirst."§ This is what He expresses in these terms:

"And I will refresh you."

He redoubles His solicitations.

"Take up My yoke upon you." What, Lord, have I only changed my servitude for another? When the ox, overwhelmed with fatigue, exhausted by the heat of the day, succumbs beneath his task, the driver, from pity, takes off the yoke and allows him to breathe a little in the shadow. And Thou pretendest to alleviate me by substituting one load for another, one yoke by another. "Fear nothing!" He says:

"For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light."

But, you say, what is this yoke which relieves those who suffer? What is this burden which rests those that are weary?

To understand it, dear reader, recall the lovely days of childhood. When you had played and raced about

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* Jer. ii.
† Canticles, ii. 17.
‡ Jerem. ii.
§ St. John, iv. 13.

to your heart's content, frolicsome with companions as volatile as yourself, a known and friendly voice called to you, and upon the threshold a caressing arm seized you, twined itself around you and carried you off. That arm was a yoke. For it held you a prisoner, and you could not have escaped from it. And yet, did you not feel that it relieved you from your infantine fatigues? You slept in this sweet clasp, and on awaking found yourself rested, refreshed, and, as it were, renovated. And when you had grown up, and your anxious mother desired to fortify you against the dangers which your innocence risked, she took you aside and calling you her son, in that inimitable tone, she laid her hand upon your shoulder. That hand was a weight, but were you at all tempted to shake it off?

Such is the yoke which Jesus would impose, such the weight which He would lay upon you. He wishes to hold you fast in His paternal arms. Ah, if this is to be a slave, it is in a most sweet manner, in the way in which Jesus Himself was a slave here below in relation to His Father. Never fear, then, to bow your shoulders beneath this yoke. He who proffers it is no tyrant, but your best friend. He knows how to render it so sweet that your only regret will be that you did not wear it sooner. You will be so much at your ease in this glorious captivity, that you will curse your former liberty. He Himself assures you so; can you doubt Him?

"And learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." And in this sweet prison "you shall find rest to your souls."

You will sleep beneath the shadow of His hand, and your sleep shall be sweet,* for Jesus Himself will guard

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* Jerem. xxxi. 26.

you as the apple of His eye,* watching over you with love, like a mother leaning over the cradle of her sleeping child. And you need not fear the nocturnal ambuscade, nor the arrow that flieth by day; nor the machinations plotted in darkness, nor the incursions of the enemy, nor the "noonday devil."† For if the enemy dare to assail you, Jesus will defend you. You will not fall, because the arms of Jesus will sustain you.‡ And if even you do fall, you shall not be wounded, for you will fall into the arms, and upon the heart, of Jesus your friend,§ and your fall will be to you, as in the bright days of childhood, an occasion for fresh caresses.

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* Psalm, xvi. 8.
† Psalm, xc. 6.
‡ Psalm, cxvii.
§ Psalm, xxxvi.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Man of Desires—(*Continued*).

HOW MUCH JESUS DESIRES US TO PRAY.

"Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."—St. John, xvi. 24.

In his famous treatise on "Prayer," St. Alphonsus says: "I say it, and I repeat it, and I will always repeat it while I live, 'all our safety is in prayer.' It is on this account that writers in their books, all preachers in their sermons, and all confessors in the sacred tribunal of penance ought constantly to recommend prayer by warning, by exhorting, and by ceaseless repetition. Pray, pray and never grow tired of praying. If you pray, your salvation is assured; but if you cease to pray, your damnation is certain."

Struck by these words of St. Alphonsus, we consider ourselves bound to consecrate a few pages to this important subject. But in order to remain faithful to the plan of this work, instead of simply proving the necessity of prayer, we will try to show our readers how much our Divine Saviour *desires* the faithful to pray to Him, and ask for a share in the rich treasures of His Heart. We will first of all establish this desire by theological principles and upon reasons deduced from Holy Scripture. Then we shall cite a few of the innumerable sayings whereby Jesus makes it known to us. And finally, we shall prove it by His conduct on earth.

As to the first point, this is how I argue: Jesus very much wishes that we should be happy, but we can only become so by His bounty, and His bounty He cannot ordinarily confer save upon those who pray,—therefore Jesus wishes us very much to pray.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, is God and Man. As God, He is the source of all good. He is Himself essentially the Supreme Good, and all created good things are but feeble drainings from His plenitude, imperceptible drops from that Ocean of Goodness. Now, theologians teach that it is of the very nature of goodness to communicate itself, to bestow itself upon indigent beings, and it is this tendency that we so well express by giving to the Lord the name of *Good God.* To satisfy this necessity, the only one possessed by a Being self-sufficient, God has created the angelic nature and the human nature, as vessels capable of receiving His liberality. Of these two natures, He willed to favor ours in a very special manner, probably because being naturally poorer and weaker, it might better answer His design of displaying His magnificence. The token which He gave of this distinguished favor was His incarnation and death with their results, that is, our adoption and mysterious participation in the divine nature through the Holy Ghost.* In this way, while He left the rebel angels to perish, He raised us, the children of rebellious Adam, and rebels ourselves (for He foresaw our sins). He raised us, I say, to a state vastly superior to that from which we fell. And if He placed us not above the angels, at least He manifested a love for us which He had never shown to them.

But in the Incarnation there was annexed to the

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* 2 St. Peter, i.

divine, inherent, and eternal love of the Son of God for us a created love, a human love, the real passion of His Heart, which is the formal and special object of the worship that we render to the Sacred Heart. And we comprehend this latter love more easily than the former. In reality, the God-man is henceforth united to us by the ties of a twofold fraternity. He is our brother in Adam by His corporeal birth of the admirable Virgin Mary, who is one of us; and we are His brethren in God by our spiritual birth from God the Father,* who is also the Father of Jesus Christ. This second birth, this regeneration, † by virtue of which we become the children of God, is one of the most certain and most sacred articles of our faith. The entire Sacred Trinity concurred to perform this marvel. The Father was the *efficient cause*, or the author. It was He who engendered us by His word, and deposited in our souls a divine and incorruptible element.‡ The Son was the *meritorious cause.* He has enabled us to merit this glory through His death.§ The Holy Spirit is the *instrumental cause*, if I may dare express myself thus,—that is to say, it is by His means in communicating this spirit of adoption ‖ that the Father has made us His children. "God," says St. Paul, "sent His Son, made of a woman, . . . that we might receive the adoption of sons; and because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." There is nothing, therefore, more clearly established than our distinction of brethren of Jesus.

Thus from whatever point you regard the Heart of

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* St. John, i.
† 1 St. Peter, i.
‡ 1 St. Peter, i.; St. James, i.; 1 St. John, iii.
§ Rom. v.
‖ St. John, iii.; Rom. viii.

Jesus, you will see that He desires to enrich us. The Heart of a God infinitely good and generous, it desires what the Eternal Word has desired, that is, to communicate to us that good whose source is God. The Heart of a God, become our brother, He is interested in seeing that His brethren are well provided for, and that He has no cause to blush at their misery, because henceforth, if He does nothing to alleviate it, our misery would in a manner be imputable to Him. A human heart, raised from the first moment of its existence to the dignity of a divine person, He desires to fulfil the task which has procured Him this supreme honor. Now, it was in order to give a chief to the elect, and to introduce them to glory,* that God eternally predestined one of the children of Adam, the Son of Mary, to be at the same time His only Son.† Jesus has therefore an interest in our admission to the heavenly Sion, that we may proclaim before the angels that the Son of man has shown Himself worthy of the choice of the highest, and to sing that endless song of the Apocalypse, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and divinity and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and benediction!" ‡

Jesus wishes with incomparable ardor that we may enjoy all the blessings of grace and of glory. And with the same ardor He must wish us to pray, since without prayer no adult can reach the kingdom of heaven, nor acquire the justice necessary to enter there.

Listen, now, to a few of the sayings in which He urges us to have recourse to Him, to draw out the waters of grace from the fountains of His Heart. §

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* Heb. ii.
† Romans, i.
‡ Apoc. v. 12.
§ Isaias, xii. 3.

"Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you."*

Who will not admire the efforts made by a God to persuade us of His disposition to hear all our prayers? It would be difficult to decide whether His solicitations reflect most honor upon His generosity or shame upon our incredulity. Not only do we not know how to love Him who has loved us so much, but we do not even know how to believe in His goodness. Justly irritated at such an affront, will He abandon us to our misery? No, He will repeat the same thing over again, He will reiterate His promises to the end. He will employ divers comparisons and many parables to make us understand that He wishes us well, at one time assuming a persuasive tone, at another, an impatient tone. One might say that He needed our prayers, He seems to beg them!

"Ask, and you shall receive." Was not this saying enough? A God has spoken, ought we not to believe Him? "Heaven and earth shall pass away," He has said, "but My word shall not pass away."† Therefore, as He has said "Ask and you shall receive," heaven and earth shall pass away ere one well-ordered prayer shall remain ineffectual. Therefore, when we have prayed, we might say, I am not absolutely sure that the sun will rise to-morrow, but what I do know is that I shall be heard. Now, are we so far from this confidence that Jesus feels Himself obliged to repeat the same thing three times over, like a man whom we have reason to doubt because he has failed to keep his word?

"Ask and you shall receive," He says, "seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you." And

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* St. Matt. vii. 7. † St. Matt. xxiv. 35.

as if this was not sufficient, He repeats His triple promise under another form:

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

This divine pledge, so often given, will doubtless at length obtain our credence. Alas! we are the worthy children of our mother. God said to Eve, "If thou eatest of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden thou shalt surely die." But Eve did not believe it. We have inherited her incredulity, and only believe what we can touch with our fingers. And then, our hearts are so narrow, so little disposed to be generous, especially toward God, that we can with difficulty realize that God can be so good to us. Jesus knows all this. And though God spoke to Eve of His justice only once, Jesus thinks it not too much to speak to us a hundred times of His mercy. He is resolved to carry by main force this impregnable citadel of our heart, shut against Him by mistrust. So that, while the simple word of a mortal* could suspend the march of the universe, and stop the course of the sun and the moon, whilst the word of another mortal could open and shut the heavens at will,† a God beholds Himself compelled to resort to all the artifices of His divine eloquence to conquer our obstinacy and open our hearts of stone. The prayer of the righteous penetrates the heavens, but the word of God cannot penetrate our hearts. Jesus has more difficulty in convincing us of His goodness than we have in disarming His justice. If He does not renounce this thankless task, He must have success very much at heart.

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* Josue, x. 12. † St. James, v. 17, 18.

As, then, we seem to doubt whether He is any better than ourselves, He will tolerate, after a manner, this idea which does such injustice to His Heart. He will be satisfied if we only reckon Him to be no worse than we are. He asks if we know a man so hard-hearted as to refuse a morsel of bread to the demand of his child. But this turn of thought is not sufficiently striking for His design. He must express more energetically all the offensiveness of our distrust. He must compel us to admit that we treat Him as we dare not treat the meanest of men.

"What man is there among you, of whom, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or, if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent?"

Any man, however vile and unnatural he might be, would consider himself insulted if believed capable of such cruelty. "For shame," he would cry, "what an opinion you have of me! Why, the tigress suckles her young, the vulture warms hers beneath her wings, and do you deem me more pitiless than these monsters?" Or rather, he would only reply by abuse, or an indignant silence. But Jesus disdains not to answer our offensive doubts, and assures us that He is not more hard-hearted than the least affectionate of fathers.

"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Remark well these expressions. He does not say the *Lord your God*, or the *Most High*, but *your Father who is in heaven.* He from whom you hold the life of soul and body; He from whom proceeds all paternity;* He who has given to man, to the vulture, to the tiger

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* Ephes. iii. 15.

those bowels of paternal kindness which the least complaint of their offspring stirs profoundly.

Remark also, that by reasoning in this way, Jesus authorizes us to accuse Him of cruelty if ever He repulses the least of our prayers. I say *the least of our prayers;* and yet, it is certain that, for reasons worthy of His wisdom and His goodness, God does not always grant the first time all that we ask. Was this first prayer, being thus repulsed, useless and inefficacious? By no means. How many blows of the axe the woodman is compelled to deal the venerable oak before it falls! Will you say that only the last blow availed, and that all the others were useless? So ought we to reason respecting prayer. But what often happens? Little as God puts our trust and perseverance to the test, we lose heart, give up praying, and look upon this tender Father as a hard master, or an avaricious and unkindly friend who will not deign to put himself out to oblige another. Well, these wrongful suspicions do not repulse the Man of Desires; but more persevering in trying to induce us than we are to pray; more eager to open to us His treasures than we are to take them, He deigns to accommodate Himself to our low way of seeing things, and He teaches us in two parables that there is no master so unjust, no friend so little generous, from whom we may not, by force of importunity, extort what we wish.*

But nothing is more suited to conquer our obstinate mistrust than what He said to His disciples on the eve of His death. At that solemn moment, His kind Heart showed itself more open than ever, and was softened by the thought of so soon parting from those He loved so well. He had on former occasions employed a great

* St. Luke xi. and xviii.

many parables and figures in His teachings. Those portions of the naked truth which were too dazzling for their still feeble vision He had clothed in enigmatical guises. But the time had come to speak without parables.* Through the August Sacrament, which they have just received for the first time, they are in Him and He in them. Can He speak in enigmas to friends so dear? Will not they themselves be shocked if He appears to them, as heretofore, like a judge, or a common father or ordinary friend? Could they any longer doubt His tenderness, who had just given Himself as their food, and was about to die for them on the morrow? Not content, therefore, with affirming for the last time the absolute efficaciousness and all-powerfulness of prayer, He will now reveal to them clearly, and, as it were, enable them to touch the secret of this efficaciousness. And this time, at least, He will succeed in convincing them; for it is evident from the Book of Acts, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the history of the first ages of the Church, that, along with the precept of brotherly love, there was none which the disciples of the Saviour more clearly retained, more faithfully practised, and more successfully inculcated to the faithful, than the precept of prayer. May we also let ourselves be persuaded by these words, so simple, yet pregnant, and so gratify somewhat the Heart of the Man of Desires.

"Amen, Amen I say to you: if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you."†

Meditate upon this verse, O Christian soul, and all your doubts, if any still remain, will vanish like mists before the rising sun. I will not stop to remark that He who thus speaks is the Truth itself, nor that, in

* St. John, xvi. 25. † St. John, xvi. 23.

order to obtain from you an entire faith, He twice repeats a kind of oath. Pay attention merely to these words: "If you ask the Father anything *in My name*, He will give it you." And how can He refuse to give it to us? What is it to ask the Father *in the name of Jesus?* Have you ever reflected upon this? It is to present to the Father a request signed with the name of Jesus. It is therefore, in one sense, asking on behalf of Jesus Himself, and in replying to a prayer thus made, it is less to us than to His Son that God gives. In one word, by permitting us to ask of the Father whatever we will in His name, Jesus seems to give us a blank signature to make use of as we please in all things relating to our salvation. He confides to us His seal to seal all our petitions, and seems to say, "Every time you are in need, go to My Father. I have with Him an infinite credit; ask of Him as much as you please; tell Him that it is I who ask what is My due, and in proof show Him this My nuptial ring (because the name of Jesus is the sign of the alliance of the Divine Word with our human nature). At sight of this token, I tell you in truth all the treasury of heaven will be opened to you." And the Church has understood Him to mean this, for she terminates all her prayers in the adored name of her Divine Spouse. She believes that in itself human prayer resembles an arrow shot by an infant hand, which cannot reach the mark,* or the smoke that crawls dully upon the ground instead of mounting heavenward. This is why she adds: "*We implore Thee, O God, through Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ:*" and immediately our sluggish incense rises and penetrates even to the heavenly sanctuary which it perfumes with the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. The arrow

* Psalm, lxiii. 8.

wings its flight, and mounts straight to the throne of the Eternal, who bends toward us, saying: "Thou hast wounded My Heart, My sister, My spouse, thou hast wounded My Heart."*

We have said that to pray in the name of Jesus Christ is, in a sense, to ask in the place of Jesus Himself. If this is so, God could not reject such a prayer without affronting His divine Son. Is not this evidently contained in those words with which the Saviour addresses us on the road to Gethsemani? "If you abide in Me, . . . you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." †

What is it to abide in Jesus? It is to be intimately united to Jesus, to form but one spirit with Jesus;‡ to be a living member of that new man of which the Church is the body and Jesus the head,§ and which lives by the spirit of Jesus. St. Paul tells us that no one member of the human body can either suffer or rejoice without the other members sympathizing. How much more does He who is the head and heart of this mystical body feel the needs, the sufferings, and joys of all His members! So that when I need some particular grace, Jesus too is in need. When I am feeble, He too is, in a sense, sick; and if through prayer I obtain relief, I may say in truth that Jesus is relieved. ‖

This is also deducible from those other words pronounced on the same occasion: "I am the vine, you are the branches." Sometimes, when the drought is excessive, the vine planted upon an arid slope beholds its still tender shoots languish; we say then that the vine *asks for* rain, although the still vigorous trunk has not yet felt the drought. And if a beneficent rain comes

* Canticles, iv. 9. † St. John, xv. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 17.
§ Col. ii. ‖ St. Matt. xxv.

to reanimate its branches, we say that the vine has regained life. Thus, whether it be Jesus fastened to His cross and thirsting for the salvation of our souls, or whether it be our souls themselves tormented by the ardor of passions which cry aloud to the heavenly Vine-dresser, "I thirst!" it is always Jesus who cries. It is He who in the one instance, as in the other, asks for the dews of heaven; it is He not less than ourselves who feels refreshed when they descend upon our souls. And beholding them flourish by the influence of these salutary waters, He gives thanks to the Father both for Himself and for us, saying, "My Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast heard Me,"* "I was thirsty and Thou gavest Me to drink."†

Do you understand now, O Christian soul, what it is to pray in the name of Jesus? Do you think that a prayer made under such conditions could meet with a refusal? This is how the saints have raised the dead, transported mountains, changed the course of rivers, cast out devils, converted the most obstinate sinners,—for, in a word, nothing was impossible to them.‡ Such was the great secret which the divine Master revealed to His own on the eve of His passion, and which none up to that day, neither Elias, nor Moses, nor Daniel, had known. It was one of those good things which the eye of man had not seen, nor his ear heard, which his heart had not even wished for, and which God kept in reserve for the happier times of the law of grace.§

One last token whereby the Saviour expresses His desire to see us pray is the example which He has given us in this as in all the rest. For note well that He had no need of long prayers to obtain that which He wished.

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* St. John, xi. 41.
† St. Matt. xxv.
‡ St. Matt. xvii. 19.
§ Isaias, lxiv. 4.

A single glance up to heaven, a single sigh,* had sufficed to ransom all possible worlds. And was not the very beating of His Heart a continuous prayer? A prayer more harmonious than all those of David, more eloquent than those of Noe, Elias, Samuel, Daniel, or Jeremias. Did He not recall to the mind of the heavenly Father at each instant that it was to please Him and to save our souls that His Son had abased Himself to assume the form of a servant?† And yet, in order to inspire us with esteem for this sacred exercise, the most worthy of a created intelligence, He willed to pray often, at length, and in an ostensible manner. He acted like a pious mother, who, when she would pray, places her little one on his knees beside her, and holds his tiny hands in hers in order that he may learn by imitation to do the same. We see Him at twelve years of age pass three days in prayer at the Temple of Jerusalem. He prayed for forty days ere commencing to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven.‡ He spent the whole night in prayer before choosing and sending forth His apostles.§ He prayed in His joys,‖ and in His sorrows,¶ He prayed for His friends,** for His enemies,†† and for those who were hereafter to believe in Him.‡‡ He prayed upon Thabor §§ as well as upon Calvary; and seated at table among His own ‖‖ as well as in solitude.¶¶ He prayed in the morning before beginning His laborious journeys,*** and in the evening after send-

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* St. Mark, vii. 34.
‡ St. Matt. iv.
‖ St. Luke, x.
** St. John, xvii.
‡‡ St. John, xvii.
‖‖ St. Matt. xxvi.
*** *Ibid.*
† Phil. ii. 7.
§ St. Luke, vi.
¶ St. John, xii.
†† St. Luke, xxiii.
§§ St. Luke, ix.
¶¶ St. Mark, i.

ing away the multitude of His hearers whom He had healed, relieved, and nourished with the bread of His word, as well as with material bread. When harassed with fatigue, He retired to some mountain and sought repose in prayer.* He prayed at the moment of performing His miracles,† in order to teach us the way to perform them in our turn.‡ And when He had obtained the favor asked, He prayed in form of thanksgiving in order to teach us gratitude.§ In the darkest hour of His agony in Gethsemani He prayed; while they nailed Him to the cross He prayed;‖ He prayed while the last drops of His blood trickled silently down the cross, and His last sigh was a prayer. And now that He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and beholds at His feet all the heavenly powers, He prays still. He charged St. Paul and St. John to inform us.¶ In short, what has He been doing in the bottom of our tabernacles these nineteen centuries past? He continues night and day His peaceful and indefatigable prayer for those who forget Him, for those who run gayly to their ruin, for those who never pray at all!

Not satisfied with having given us His example, He teaches us the method. Although He recommends us to pray continually,** He would not have us exhaust our brains in seeking for fine words, nor our chests in pronouncing lengthened discourses. He fears the fatigue it would occasion, and the probable disgust. "When you pray," He says, "speak not much as the heathens; for they think they may be heard in their much speaking. Be not, therefore, like to them, for your Father

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* St. Matt. xiv.
† St. Mark, viii.
‡ St. Mark, ix.
§ St. John, xi.
‖ St. Luke, xxiii.
¶ Heb. vii.; 1 St. John, ii.
** St. Luke, xviii. 1.

knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him." * He thus anticipates the freethinkers of our age who pretend that prayer is unnecessary because God knows our necessities already. God knows our need; therefore, concludes the divine Master, it is unnecessary to expose them with great clamor of words or in studied phrases; but He grants nothing save to prayer,† therefore we must pray. Then Jesus reveals and puts in our mouth that form which doubtless He employed Himself, in order that the Father, who had so often heard it issue from the lips of His Son, might be in some sort compelled to lend His ear, like one who hears from afar the first notes of an air once a favorite with one beloved. This prayer contains in a few words all that we can desire or ask for, and it so blends our interests with those of the Father, that He cannot refuse to hear us without injury to His own glory. And how it places us at our ease in the very outset! "Our Father who art in heaven."

With what attention, what piety we would say all our prayers if we were thoroughly imbued with these facts! If we said to ourselves, "I will pray to the heavenly Father in the name of Jesus: I will ask for those graces to which I have a right through Jesus Christ: I will ask them for Jesus Christ, of whom I am a member, and whose glory is interested in my holiness." Oh, let us never be lukewarm in prayer, but, as St. Teresa says, go to our orisons as to a banquet, in the nuptial robe, the garment of high festivals, that is, with joy and eagerness, forgetting, for the sake of prayer, all our ordinary business, however urgent it may be! Let us not regret the time so spent, reflecting that it is the best employed of the day. Let us respect Him to whom we

* St. Matt. vi. 7, 8. † St. James, iv.

speak, He in whose name we speak, and let us respect ourselves. We shall then discharge the office of Jesus Christ as a Priest at the altar, and hence St. Peter and St. John tell us that all the faithful are kings and priests.* Nor should we let those seasons of dryness, whereby God sometimes tries us, in any way discourage us. They will never equal those of the Saviour in the Garden of Olives. They will never place us in the position of being unable to recite slowly the Lord's Prayer, to make an act of resignation, to say to our heavenly Father, "Give me Thy love, final perseverance, heaven! Give me that grace which I most need at this moment! I ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

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* 1 St. Pet. ii. 9; Apoc. v. 10.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Triumph.—Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.

SORROW OF JESUS ON HIS ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.—EXHORTATION TO LOVE OF THE CROSS.

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy King cometh to thee, meek and sitting upon an ass."—St. Matt. xxi. 5.

"I am become miserable, and am bowed down even to the end: I walked sorrowful all the day long."—Psalm, xxxvii. 7.

"And thy life shall be as it were hanging before thee."—Deut. xxviii. 66.

READING the above texts, the Christian soul may probably exclaim: "What! the triumphant entry into Jerusalem included in the sorrows of the Sacred Heart?" Assuredly yes! Listen! Doubtless you believe that Jesus knew the future, and, as a consequence, He knew what would befall Him in that perfidious city five days later. Well, start from this point, and say if there ever was funeral more sad, more cruel than that triumph.

Let us suppose for a moment that you have earned a right to the gratitude of a great city. You may have fed all its poor during a famine, or discovered and defeated the secret plot of some enemy who was about to surprise it and deliver it up to the flames. In return for this good deed it wishes to offer you a magnificent ovation. Like Mardochai of yore, at Susan, it would conduct you through the streets with the crown upon your head and the kingly purple upon your shoulders. But you know by revelation that in a few days its

ungrateful inhabitants will drag you to the doom of the infamous. Would not your triumph be more cruel than the torment itself? Traversing the streets strewn with flowers, you would see the tribunal where iniquitous judges would shortly pronounce your sentence. Arrived at the market-place, splendidly decorated in your honor, you fancy you behold your scaffold erected. And amid the joyous shouts of the people you hear in imagination the cries: "Death to him! To the gibbet!"

Such was the entry of the Saviour into His city of Jerusalem. To-day the Jews cast their garments beneath the feet of His poor steed, but soon they will strip Him of His own clothing. To-day they proclaim His goodness, and soon they will accuse Him of imaginary crimes. To-day the crowd, even to the little children, cry: "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Soon other cries will follow these: "He is a blasphemer, a disturber, away with Him, crucify Him! We have no king but Cæsar!"

"This," He says to Himself, as He advances slowly, "this is the abode of the high-priest, where I shall be tried, condemned, buffeted, spat upon. There is the palace of Pilate, where I shall be scourged, crowned with thorns, given over to the insults of the soldiery. Near it rises the Gabbatha, where, naked and bleeding, I shall be shown to the people. That building whose roof I see is the place where Herod will mock my royalty; and there," he adds, shuddering, "there is Golgotha, where I shall carry My cross, to die upon it between two thieves!"

Tell me, was there not here an apprenticeship to a frightful repetition of His passion, augmented by the bitterness of the contrast?

Besides, Jesus was present in spirit at the meetings which His foes were holding at that very hour. He heard them say among themselves: "What shall we do to detach the people from His person? The people know that He has raised up Lazarus from the dead, and we cannot call this miracle in question. Suppose we kill this Lazarus? Suppose we kill Jesus Himself? Even if He be innocent, we can, without incurring guilt, sacrifice Him to the interests of the people, who will be exposed to the wrath of the Romans if they are informed that a new King of the Jews has arisen. Yes, He must die! But He must die before the solemnity of the Passover, for fear that the Galileans, who will then be here in large numbers, should rise in His defence."

The Saviour has scarcely entered the Temple when they begin to dispute with Him: Dost Thou hear the cries of Thy disciples? Why dost Thou not silence them?* He ejects the traders from His Father's house, and they ask by what right He does so, and who gave Him authority so to act.†

It was thus with all the joys of the Heart of Jesus. The knowledge which He had of the future always intruded and embittered them. And He Himself was pleased to season them with bitterness. Thus in the midst of the glories of Thabor He talked with Moses and Elias of *His passion.*‡ Because His love was not satisfied to die once, He would taste of death, in a manner, *three times:* in the mystery upon which we are dwelling, in the sight of the places appointed for His sufferings, in Gethsemani, by anticipation, and finally in all its frightful reality on Calvary.

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* St. Luke, xix. † St. Matt. xxi.
‡ St. Luke, ix 30

Exhortation to the Love of the Cross.

O thou, whosoever thou art that weepest, who findest the salutary cup of humiliation and suffering too bitter, glance at thy Saviour, and say if thy sorrows are like to His sorrows.

He is the holiest of the holy, and He suffers without complaining. He suffers voluntarily. The thought that you will be benefited by His sufferings makes Him rejoice to bear them. He thirsts for new tortures. He drinks deep draughts of the awful cup, and drains it to the very dregs.

And you who are a sinner (for what man is not?), cannot without profound disgust swallow the few drops of bitterness that the heavenly Physician mixes with your cup of happiness.

You shun the cross as a hideous phantom; its nails, its thorny wreath, the blood that empurples it, draw from you cries of terror, and you hear not the divine voice which saith: "Fear not, it is I!"

How, then, can you congratulate yourself upon being a disciple of Christ? Why does not your forehead redden beneath your fingers as they make the sign of redemption? What signify those words upon your lips, taught by the Man of sorrows: "Father, Thy will be done!"

Listen to the doctrine of the Apostle: "We glory in tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope, and hope confoundeth not. Our old man must be crucified, that the body of sin may be destroyed to the end that we may serve sin no longer. We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good, to such

as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints. For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born amongst many brethren. And whom He predestinated, them He also called. And whom He called, them He also justified. And whom He justified, them He also glorified. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us."*

"In that day after which the whole creation sigheth, and which shall behold the revealing of the sons of God. For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons." †

You see, O Christian soul, that you are a brother of Christ. You must resemble Christ. You must bear Christ's image; you must love the cross.

Otherwise, how will you stand before it at the last day, when it shall appear luminous in the clouds of heaven? ‡ If you desire that it shall be to you a token of salvation and of confidence, you must love it in this life, such as it was upon Calvary: cold, rude, bloody: it is *thus* that it must be borne.

Why do you dread it? Was it not by it that you were ransomed? Was it not by it that you were baptized,—anointed with the unction of the mighty?

Why do you dread it? Is it not the tree of life? Have you not a thousand times tasted of its fruits in

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* Romans, vi. and viii. † Heb. xii. 6, 8. ‡ St. Matt. xxiv.

prayer, in retirement, and especially at the table of the Lord?

For the wheat of the elect was ripened upon Calvary and the wine that produces the virgins was trodden out by the cross. It was the cross which pressed it out drop by drop from the heart of God.

Does not the cross gleam always upon the altar of sacrifice? And without the sacrifice where would be the sacrament?

And tell me, what do you gain by your ceaseless complaints? Patience would alleviate your burden. Patience would change its bitterness to sweetness, whereas your grumblings transform medicines into poisons.

You say that you love Jesus. Behold Him bent beneath the load of the world's sins, and of your sins. Will you not come to His assistance?

Carry for one moment His cross with the stranger from Cyrene. Offer up to the Most High your sufferings in union with His, for the salvation of your brethren.

And in the day of recompense He will say to you, as He holds forth His glorious hands, "Come unto Me, ye blessed of My Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. For I was thirsty" (for the salvation of men) "and you gave me to drink; I bent beneath the weight of their crimes, and you have helped me."

*Affections and Prayer.**

O Divine Jesus! O Father of my soul! Regard not

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* Taken from the works of Father Thomas of Jesus.

this rebellious will of mine, the enemy of its own welfare. Be Thy will done always, everywhere, and in everything! I this day with all my heart sacrifice my own will to Thine. Lead me, O my God, whenever I stray! Call me back whenever I wander. Stop me when I flee; embrace me when I seek Thee. Deal with me according to Thy will, ever holy, ever merciful, and judge me not according to mine own will, which is feeble and inconstant.

I would rather live according to Thy will in chains, abandoned, persecuted, than to be free and happy by my own choice. A single instant of Thy divine communion can make the bitterest things sweet. And the most crooked paths will become through Thy light the straightest and safest. Thus, O Lord, if it is disadvantageous to me to dwell in joy, disturb in the manner that seemeth best to Thee the repose and serenity of my life. But keep me ever beneath Thy hand, and never allow my will to be done to the prejudice of Thine. Most holy Mother, and most faithful servant of God, grant that I may never desire aught that is contrary to the will of Jesus!

Practice.

As St. Francis de Sales has said, give a hearty welcome to the cross which God sends you; and offer it up, in union with the sufferings of Christ, for the conversion of sinners.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Last Farewell.

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF ST. JOHN. MYSTERY OF OUR UNION WITH JESUS.

"Behold I die.—Gather yourselves together and hearken to Israel, your Father."—Genesis, xlviii. 21.; xlix. 2.

Let us approach with respectful awe one of the most sacred passages of the holy Gospel. It contains perhaps the most touching, the most adorable manifestation of the tenderness of the Heart of our God-man, and our Brother, Jesus. Would that like him who penned this sublime page, we might repose even for a moment upon the Heart from which issued those burning words, in order to gather therefrom a spark of that sacred fire which consumes it, and communicate it to our readers! For though we are a thousand-fold unworthy to speak of such things, this is no reason for leaving the light under a bushel. We will therefore let it shine before our reader's eyes, and many perhaps have never read this admirable chapter of St. John. But let them not expect long explanations from us. We fear to profane and chill this passage—the last adieu of the Heart of Jesus to His own.

For this is really His last good-bye. Jesus has reached the most solemn moment of His mortal life. For three years past He has traversed the villages and hamlets of Judea, where He has proclaimed to all com-

ers the glad tidings, showing man the way to heaven by showing him love—always love. His mission is about to close. His foes are secretly plotting His death. The cross is ready for Him. Even now one of His disciples has agreed with His enemies on the price of His blood. Judas has just left his Master and his fellow-disciples to seek the ministers of Satan, and his place is empty in the hall of the farewell festival.

Before parting from His friends, Jesus will bestow upon them a last token of His love. One that shall contain all the rest, an epitome of His wonders, the supreme effort of His loving kindness. Having washed the feet of every one,—not excepting the traitor,—He fed them with His own flesh, and gave them to drink of His own blood; bestowing on them the power and commanding them to renew frequently this marvel on behalf of those for whom He was about to die.

Jesus is in them: they are in Him. He is now about to reveal to them the mystery of this ineffable union, which makes man one with his God.

"I am the true Vine," He says.

The vine is a shrub of mean aspect, having neither strength nor beauty, and only valuable for its fruit, created to gladden the heart of man.* It exists only to fructify. In a similar way the Lord Jesus appeared in the eyes of the Jews without beauty or splendor. They saw Him but did not recognize Him. But why did they not taste of His fruit, since "the tree is known by its fruit"?† His fruit is the wine that maketh the virgins to germinate.‡ "I sat down under His shadow, whom I desired," says the spouse of the Canticles, "and His fruit was sweet to my palate." He came not to

* Psalm, ciii. 15. † St. Matt. xii. 33.
‡ Zach. ix. 17.

dazzle the gaze, but to save the world.* He "went about doing good."†

"And my Father is the Husbandman." How do they treat the vine? Harshly. Every part that is not useful for the production of grapes is cut away. It is impoverished in itself, in order that we may be enriched. So did the Eternal Father, the divine Husbandman, treat Jesus, the true Vine, with severity and apparent harshness. He smote Him; He wounded Him because of our sins. He assigned Him for His palace, a stable; for His cradle, a manger; for His courtiers, twelve fishermen; for His subjects, or rather for brethren, the ignorant whom He had instructed, the sick, the leprous, the blind whom He had cured, the poor whom He had fed; for His crown, a wreath of thorns; for His sceptre, a reed; for His royal mantle, His wounds and blood; for His throne, an infamous gibbet, a cross! What vine was ever treated more harshly!

"I am the Vine, you are the branches." Can anything stronger than this be imagined? Is there any closer union than that of a tree and its branches? The branches issue from the stock of the vine, its bark is opened and rent to give place to the shoots. So was the Saviour's side opened by the blow of the lance, and it is from thence that we came forth and drew our spiritual being. The branches draw forth the sap from the stem that bears them, and it is from the very Heart of our Jesus that we draw forth at every moment the life of our souls. The vine produces its fruit by means of its branches alone; and it is through us that Jesus wills to produce fruits worthy to be served at the table of His Father. The vine-dresser cuts and prunes the branches of the vine. The Eternal Father does the

* St. John, iii. and xviii. † Acts, x. 38.

same with us, by humiliations, sufferings, and crosses of every kind. Why? To make us feel His wrath? No, but His love, in order that we may bear more fruit, and become worthier to remain united to the heavenly Vine. For He will cut off the barren branches: "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He (the Father) will take away; and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

Have we not here sufficient reasons to make us understand that we are nothing in ourselves, and to determine us to remain ever closely united to Him? No. He dreads our inconstancy. He dreads for us the ambush of the monster who delights to desolate the vine.* He dreads for His tender branches the furious storms worked up by the passions. He entreats us, begs of us to abide in Him. One would think that His own happiness is allied to ours. He employs each in turn, prayer, menace, promises.

The Prayer: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing."

The Threat: "If any one abide not in Me, He shall be cast forth as a branch" (useless) "and shall wither; and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth."

The wood of the vine, so precious as long as it is united to the trunk, has no value whatever when separated from it. As the prophet remarks, not even a peg can be made out of it. It is good for nothing, but to be cast into the fire.

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* Psalm, lxxix.

The Promise: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you."

How can I express, O my God, what I feel at this? Ought I to tremble for joy, reflecting upon my happiness and glory? Ought I to weep, reflecting upon my excessive wretchedness? To abide in Thee, O Jesus, is it not to possess Thee, and in possessing Thee, to possess the plenitude of all good? And yet, Lord, Thou still makest me promises. Thou art like some mighty king that would wed a lowly slave, and thus addresses her: "Give me thy heart; I offer thee mine. Love me ever, I ask only this. As for thee, let thy desires be only limited by my power. Thy wishes shall be commands upon my love." Ah, Lord Jesus, how well Thou knowest the human heart! Its boundless capacity, which Thou only canst fill; and its littleness, which will not be satisfied with Thee, if it receives not some other favors and caresses beside. And Thou deignest to abase Thyself even to comply with its caprice, even to the employing of a thousand loving devices to fix its inconstancy! As a fond mother, to induce her babe to stay in her arms, covers it with kisses, and promises it dainties, so Thou sayest here in other terms: "If you will remain within my heart, I will caress you as a mother caresses her tender nursling upon her knees, and you shall be as infants carried at the breasts." *

And this is not all. In order to ensure that indissoluble union with us which Jesus so much desires, He appeals to the noblest sentiments of our hearts. His Father loves us: loves us with the same love that He loves His only-begotten Son.† He has proven this love by giving up that beloved Son to the death which we had

* Isaias, lxvi. † St. John, xvii.

merited.* Does not so much love deserve some gratitude? But how shall we show our gratitude? By promoting His glory? In what way? A vine-dresser glories in a vine that bears abundant fruit. In the same way Jesus says: "In this is My Father glorified that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciples" (truly).

And to bear fruit at all, however small, He tells us that we must remain united to Him.

The final reason. We owe the greatest gratitude to the Eternal Father, who has engrafted us upon the heavenly vine, and who cultivates us. We owe it also to Jesus Himself. He could furnish us with an infinity of motives, but He condenses them all in these adorable words: "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you."

I advise the reader not to pass over these words without due meditation upon them, without tasting of their sweetness. Let us continue: "Since I love you so devotedly; since I have done so much for your happiness, is it not just that you strive for My happiness and joy?" But how can I, O Lord, a vile worm, contribute to Thy joy? He Himself replies: "Abide in My love."

That is, continue to love Me, and you will render yourselves worthy of being loved by Me. My happiness and joy consist in this, and it was to obtain this result that I have spoken all this. But let Him speak Himself:

"These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you" (in order that I may rejoice in you), "and your joy may be filled."

Remark how He continually places us upon the same footing as Himself. He is the Vine, we are the branches.

* St. John, iii. 18.

His Father loves us as He loves His only Son, and Jesus loves us as His Father loves Him. He desires to find His joy in us and that we find ours in Him. Is not this treating us as brethren? This remark applies to all the rest of this discourse. But how are we to remain united to Thee, Lord? "If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love; as I also have kept My Father's commandments, and do abide in His love."

And what are Thy commandments, Lord? They are not difficult, and are all epitomized in this one: "Love one another, as I have loved you." "And," He seems to add, "doubtless you will not say that I have loved you only *a little;* my love for you could not go to greater lengths, for 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

Ah, Lord, permit me, with one of Thy apostles,* to dare to contradict Thee. There is yet a kind of love more astonishing still. It is to give one's life for an enemy. And such was Thy love, O Jesus, for we were Thine enemies when Thou didst die for us. "Speak no more to Me of enemies," He seems to reply. "You are my friends if you do the things that I command you." That is to say, upon condition of loving one another. He will not permit us to speak any more of foes, nor even of servants: "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth" (does not share his confidence). "But I have called you *friends* because all things whatsoever I have heard of My Father, I have made known to you."

He returns again to His commandment: "These things I command you, that you love one another."

His disciples will only find hatred and contempt here

* Rom. v.

below; but far from grieving over it, and allowing their love to grow cold, they are to rejoice and love their persecutors more and more. For this is a fresh trait of resemblance to their divine Master, a token of their union with Him.

"If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

I solicit pardon of the divine Heart for having, far more than I at first intended, mixed my feeble thoughts with its holy utterances. Doubtless He will pardon me if I have succeeded in showing only a few souls how sweet they are. I leave with the pious reader, as a spiritual bouquet, two thoughts, one from St. John, the other from St. Paul:

"He that loveth not (his brother) knoweth not God;" *

"If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." †

Affections and Prayers. ‡

My sweet Redeemer! Thou commandest me to love Thee, and threatenest me with hell if I love Thee not. But what hell can be so horrible, what greater evil can befall me, than to be deprived of Thy love? If, then, Thou wouldst frighten me, threaten me simply with a life deprived of Thy love. This single menace would terrify me more than a thousand hells. O my God, if the damned could burn with Thy holy love in the midst of the flames of hell, that place of torment would become to them a Paradise. And if, on the contrary,

* 1 St. John, iv. 8. † 1. Cor. xvi. 22.

‡ Taken from the works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

the blessed ones were unable to love Thee in heaven, that abode of all delight would become to them a hell. My beloved Lord, I know that by my sins I have deserved to be deprived of Thy grace, and thus condemned to be unable to love Thee more. But I hear Thee continuing to demand my love, and I feel within myself a great desire to love Thee. This desire is an effect of Thy grace, a gift which I receive from Thy goodness; give me, then, strength sufficient to follow this desire. Grant that henceforth I may be able to say in truth, from the bottom of my heart, that I may repeat without intermission, My God, I love Thee! I love Thee! I love Thee!

Thou desirest my love, O my Jesus, and I desire Thine. Pardon, then, the displeasure that I have occasioned Thee in the past. Let us love forever. I will never leave Thee, and Thou wilt never leave me. Thou wilt love me always, and I will love Thee always. My dearest Saviour, Thy merits are my hopes. Oh, cause Thyself to be loved and greatly loved by a sinner who has greatly offended Thee!

Virgin immaculate! O Mary, Mother of Jesus, and my Mother, help me! Pray to Jesus for me!

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Testament.

THE SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER OF ST. JOHN, OR THE PRAYER OF JESUS FOR HIS CHURCH.—AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"This is the blessing wherewith He blessed the children of Israel before His death."

"Such is His everlasting covenant."—Deut. xxxiii. 1; Psalm, civ. 10.

THE moment has arrived when Jesus must leave His children, and His beloved spouse, the newly-born Church. What will become of these tender objects of His love during His absence? Will the world which hates the Master show favor to the disciples? Doubtless they will be included in the same aversion as Himself. They will only need to proclaim themselves disciples of Jesus of Nazareth to excite the most furious hatred; or rather, they need but love one another; they will be recognized by this sign,* and dragged before the judges. † And what defence will they make? He forbids them to use the sword, and even the artifices of human speech. And they will have arrayed against them the heads of the Jewish nation, and very soon all the might of the Roman Empire. Their blood will flow during three centuries; and always, in succeeding times, the Church will be an object of attack from all that the world regards as powerful or wise. What will become of the poor little plant of the Gospel in the midst of

* St. John, xiii. 35. † St. Matt. x. 18.

such a tempest, that frail germ issuing from the grain of mustard-seed?* What will become of this weak flock of sheep exposed to the rage of so many wolves?† Although Jesus was Master of the future, and dominion over all peoples was secured to Him, doubtless His Heart, so tender and compassionate, was moved at the thought of so many sorrows and so much unjust persecution. This is why, before He quitted us, He did what a tender father does upon his death-bed. He thought about giving us a protector, and confided us by will to the Eternal Father. He raises His eyes to heaven, and makes a prayer full of tenderness and of sublime teachings. Listen to it. It is one of the last and most ardent emanations of that Heart which has loved us so well.‡ It is the will and testament of the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

"Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him."

"The hour is come." What hour? That which Jesus called *His hour*. The hour for which He had so much sighed. The hour, in short, when He was to be baptized in a baptism of blood.§ But how will the Father glorify the Son? By delivering Him to die, for it is by His death that Jesus is to be known. "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground, dieth, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,"‖ He had said to His disciples. He had said to the Jews: "Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world (Satan) be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things

* St. Matt. xiii. † St. Matt. x.
‡ St. John, xvii. § St. Luke, xii. 50. ‖ St. John, xii. 25.

to Myself."* It is, then, the cross for which the Heart of Jesus sighs. It is death that He asks for, in order that He may give us life: "For this is life eternal to know Thee" (O my Father), "and to believe in Him whom Thou hast sent, Jesus the Christ."

Undoubtedly, to gain eternal life it is not enough to know God. He must be loved, He must be served. But what heart would be so insensible as not to love Him, if it knew the ineffable riches of His love?

"I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was with Thee. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world: Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them; and they have kept Thy word. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine: and all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine: and I am glorified in them."

What can be more tender, more touching than this prayer? At this moment, I do not pray for the world in general, but only for My friends. It is Thou who didst choose them; it was Thou that gavest them to Me; they are still Thine, they have been faithful to Me!

"And now I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me."

That is to say, I am about to leave them to go to Thee; who, then, will henceforth watch over them? Holy Father, they are Thine, and ought to be dear to

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* St. John, xii.

Thee; keep them, then, in Thine own Name, "that they may be one, as We also are one."

Thus the Saviour does not ask His Father to preserve His disciples from persecutions and crosses, for it is in these that their glory consists. They must joy in this, as He had told them.* What, then, does He ask? That they may be *one* among themselves, by one same spirit, one same heart, one same love, in order to be collectively a living image of the union which is formed by the spirit of love between the Father and the Son. It is love, then, always love; He recommends it to them, and asks it of His Father on their behalf.

"While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled."

The accents of the Heart of Jesus become more and more touching. "Thou hast confided them to Me, and I have faithfully guarded them. Now, compelled to leave them, I place them in Thy hands; guard them, My father, in Thy turn. None have perished save the son of perdition." It is like a cry of pain torn from His loving Heart by the loss of Judas. He seems to excuse Himself for this loss, and to say: I have not guarded him less than the others: I have done what I could to reclaim him: but alas! he is a son of perdition, as he had been predicted. So He weeps over him, instead of cursing him, as his crime deserved.

"And now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy filled in themselves."

Thus, while upon the point of being delivered to His

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* St. Matt. v. 12.

enemies, the sweet Jesus thinks only of securing the happiness of His own, and of filling their hearts with joy.

"I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, as I also am not of the world."

This is a new reason for touching the heart of the Father. Henceforth they will be exposed to the hatred of the world, because they have believed Thy word, O my Father; it is therefore but just that Thou shouldst defend them.

"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil."

That is, from sin, from infidelity, the only evil worthy of the name.

"And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me: that they all may be one: as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

In making this prayer, Jesus then had each one of us present in His thought. And what does He ask for us? Once again, love, union, unity in the love of God and in fraternal love. It is as if He said: O my Father, Thou art in Me; I am in Thee; We are but one same and only God by the unity of Our substance. I pray Thee that, by means of love, mine own may be one in each other, so as to make but a single heart, a single soul; that thus united, they may be in us. For St. John says elsewhere, "God is love, and he that abideth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."* What is it that separates men? It is selfishness, the unbridled love of *I.*

* 1 St. John iv. 16.

By love each individual *I* blends and forms but one, each one only loving himself corporately, as a member of the mystical body; "where there is neither Jew, nor Gentile, nor barbarian, nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all."* But this marvel is only possible by means of the divine love. Through that all human hearts are like a multitude of small rings joined together, not two by two, forming a chain as fragile as it is long, but joined all together, and brought close to each other by one great ring which links them and interlaces them in an inseparable manner. Then would cease all dissensions, quarrels, hatreds, lawsuits, murders, and those enormous fratricides which, under the name of wars, dishonor the human family. Then the grand Christian ideal would be realized: *God all in all!*† The earth would become a paradise of innocence and happiness, and the angels would leave their celestial abode to come and dwell with us. Such was the sweet dream of the Heart of Jesus at this moment, and it was this which was seen in that age—alas, too fleeting!—which we designate under the name of *the primitive Church.*

"And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as We also are one."

Jesus speaks as man. The glory which the Father gave Him was the elevation in His person of man of humanity to the dignity of Son of God, by uniting it at the very moment of conception in the womb of the Virgin to the person of the Word. Thus, the Son of man, the Son of Mary, is a divine person. He is the very Son of God by nature. Now, this quality of Son of God, which Jesus has by nature, He has imparted to

* Col. iii. 11. † 1 Cor. xv.

us by the grace of adoption at baptism, and has confirmed it to us in the other sacraments, particularly in Holy Communion, which is, properly speaking, the Sacrament of Unity. By this grace we become not only the children of the Father, but also the members of one only body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. Listen to the remainder of this admirable prayer:

"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast also loved Me. Father, they also whom Thou hast given Me, I will that where I am they also may be with Me; that they may see My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world. Just Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me: and I have made known Thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Affections and Prayer.

O Jesus! O God of love! Hast Thou left any difference henceforth between Thyself and Thy unworthy creatures? Thou didst share our lowliness, and gavest us a share of Thy glory. If we are the children of Adam by nature, Thou didst well to become in time a child of Adam by nature,—by that human nature with which Thou didst voluntarily clothe Thyself. If Thou art by nature and eternally the Son of the Eternal Father, Thou hast made us the children of the Eternal Father,—at least, by the grace of adoption. If the Father is in Thee, Thou art in us. If Thou art one

with the Father, we are, united, one in the Father and in Thee. If the Father loveth Thee with the same love with which He loves Himself, He also loves us with the same love with which He loves Thee. In short, if He has placed Thee at His right hand in glory, Thou willest that we should partake of Thy glory, and sit with Thee "on Thy throne."*

O Heart of Jesus! O abyss of Love, wherein one delights to plunge, to lose one's self, to forget one's self! Is not this, O Jesus, the abyss of which St. Paul desired that we should know "the length, and breadth, and depth, and height"?† Oh, why do not men understand it? What would riches be to them then? How then would they look upon the titles of emperor, king, prince, lord, and all those toys in which the puerile vanity of the world glories?

But how far am I from understanding it myself, O God! If I understood it, Lord, if I had once measured the breadth of Thy Heart, would my own be so straitened? Should I feel so much difficulty in making such and such sacrifices for Thee, which for so long a time Thou demandest of my cowardice, of my pride, of my sensuality? Should I be so hard toward the poor, so haughty toward my equals, so arrogant with my inferiors, sometimes rebellious, and sometimes cringing toward my superiors?

O my God, if it pleaseth Thee, send Thy Spirit into our hearts, in order that we may better understand the mystery of Thy charity, which "passeth knowledge," and thus "renew the face of the earth."

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* Apoc. iii. 21. † Ephes. iii. 18.

PRACTICE.

Behold in all men Jesus Himself. Jesus our *Lord* in superiors, Jesus our *brother* in our equals. Jesus humiliated and suffering in our inferiors and in the poor, and thus regulate our behavior towards these different classes of persons according to this very real and very Christian ideal.

CHAPTER XXV.

Gethsemani.

A CHARACTERISTIC OF THE GOSPEL.—GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERY OF GETHSEMANI.—FEAR.—WEARINESS.—AFFECTIONS.

"In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God."—St. John, i. 1.

"And He began to fear and to be heavy, and He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death."—St. Mark, xiv. 33, 34.

The Gospel is a wonderful book. It recounts the glory of its heroes without enthusiasm, and with a calmness which commands respect and faith. We feel that God alone could say such sublime truths in such simple language. The Gospel tells of its heroes' humiliations with simplicity and without excitement, without any preamble, and without thinking of the effect which the apparent contradiction may produce upon the reader's mind. We may say that it enters into more details respecting the abasement of the Son of man than respecting His glory, differing thus from human writers, who delight to conceal whatever may diminish the renown of their heroes, or at least to present it under favorable colors, sometimes even to transform it altogether, in order to dwell with complacency on all that tends to exalt them.

In this respect St. John is remarkable. He is justly likened to the eagle. With a single sweep of his wing

he bounds to the highest heavens, penetrates to the bosom of the uncreated light, which conceals the Divine Essence, and there, fixing his bold gaze upon the Eternal Trinity, and particularly upon the adorable Person whose history he is about to pen, he raises that sublime cry which, like the creative utterance of the Word Himself, carries light into the midst of darkness: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Then descending with the same rapidity with which he had mounted, listen to what He says upon earth: "And the Word was made"—what do you expect? Made cherub, or seraph? No, He does not even say *man*,—the name is still too dignified. A man is before all else intelligence. What, then? "And the Word was made *flesh*."

This is the case from one end of the Gospels to the other. Here Jesus walks upon the waves of the sea, and there we see Him exhausted with fatigue. Here He feeds more than five thousand men with five loaves, and there He is Himself pressed by hunger, and reduced to seek a few forgotten figs from a fig-tree. Here, with a word, He drives out a whole legion of demons, and there He flies before a handful of foes. Here He receives the adoration of Moses and Elias, and there we see Him covered with shame and contempt, defiled by the spittings of a vile rabble. Here He treats with God for the ransom of the world, and there He is sold Himself. Here He raises the dead, and there He Himself is put to death. Ask not of the sacred writers how such opposite things can meet in the same person. They tell you what they have seen with their own eyes, what they have heard with their own ears, what their

own hands have touched,* and this ought to suffice. Jesus is the Word of God, but the Word made flesh. If you ask them how could the Word, being God, submit to so many humiliations, they will reply in the words of the Master Himself, "Thus God loved the world." If you insist and still question them how could man inspire his God with so lively an interest, how did he become the object of such tender love on the part of the Eternal Word Himself, they will answer: "God is love, we believe in the love which He hath for us:† our knowledge goes no farther."

But the scene wherein we most discover the adorable trials, the lovable humiliations of the Son of God, is the agony in the Garden of Gethsemani. In the other parts of His passion He is a prey to the cruelty of men who knew Him not.‡ And although we are astonished at their blindness and their malice, yet we know from other places that the depravity of the human heart can go as far as that. Here Jesus is all alone with the Divine Justice. We are present at the spectacle of a God become the object of His Father's wrath and groaning beneath the weight of His avenging arm. Before His iniquitous judges He maintains the noble dignity of oppressed innocence, but in the Garden of Olives He bows His head, blushes at Himself,§ trembles and asks for mercy.

Let us enter upon the contemplation of this sweet and terrible mystery, and putting aside all considerations which we might make upon the horror with which sin ought to inspire us, since God punishes it wherever He meets it, even in His own Son, the voluntary and innocent victim of our iniquities, let us en-

* 1 St. John, i. 1.
† 1 St. John, iv.
‡ 1 Cor. ii.
§ Psalm, lxviii. 8.

deavor to penetrate into the afflicted heart of the Saviour, and try to understand to some extent how great and mighty was the love which placed Him in a state so deserving of pity.

Jesus has just celebrated for the first time the sacrifice of the New Law, and has made for all of us the preparations for the celestial banquet. For it was with each one of us in view that He said to His apostles, "Do this in commemoration of Me." He rises from table, saying "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

Then, in a discourse which recalls the throbbing of our mother's heart when she pressed us closely to her breast, as if to make us enter into that sweet asylum, He revealed His immense tenderness, the prodigious riches of the mystery of our adoption. He, as it were, envelopes us in His Heart, and in a measure crushes out our nothingness beneath the weight of the glory of our union with Himself. There all was joy, transport (and why may I not say it with Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, with the Seraph of Assisi ?), there all was *a frenzy of love.* If we find the word too strong, let us but recall a passage of this discourse too little known: "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love. He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him, . . . and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him."

But here the scene changes. Jesus has passed over the torrent of Cedron, and it is there, in that garden, that the Divine Justice awaits its victim. Hardly has He entered it than His countenance, but just now radiant, becomes clouded. His brow seems burdened with

dark cares, His complexion grows pale, His respiration becomes difficult; His eyes, which were fixed on heaven, or bent with tenderness upon His disciples, now look upon the ground. He begins "to fear, and to be heavy." Great God! How can we express all that these simple words of the Gospel contain!

To fear. O mystery! The only Son of God, Jesus, fears. He who reposed at this very moment in the splendors of the sanctuary, in the bosom of the Eternal; He whom the cherubim look upon tremblingly; He before whose name every knee shall bow in heaven, and on earth, and in hell, He is afraid! He who but a short time since said to His own, "Fear nothing, I have overcome"! who came to deliver us from the perpetual bondage in which we were held by the fear of death,* now fears Himself, trembles and grows pale with terror!

And what is the cause of this fear? Doubtless, death. For Jesus, who is true God, is also true man. Now, at this moment, by an incomprehensible miracle, the human nature in Him is abandoned to its weakness. It no longer draws help from the divine Nature to which it is united in the person of the Word. And in this abandonment it cannot behold unterrified the frightful death preparing for it. Thus the Saviour who had done so many prodigies to solace men, performs one here to torment Himself. It is the pelican who tears its entrails to assuage the thirst of its young with its blood.

But what affrights Him most of all is the anger of His Father. Was Jesus really and truly subject to His Father's wrath? Yes. It is certain that the divine wrath is necessarily attached to sin, so that God would cease to be God if He ceased to hate sin. Therefore, in

* Heb. ii. 15.

voluntarily taking upon Himself all our iniquities, Jesus necessarily took upon Himself also the divine wrath, and, to speak in St. Paul's words, the divine malediction. So He complains in these terms by the lips of the Psalmist: Thy wrath hath come upon Me, and Thy terrors have troubled Me. They have come round about Me like water all the day.* O Jesus, Thou perceivest that our crimes and the wrath of the Almighty were too heavy a burden for our feeble shoulders; and touched with compassion, Thou didst say to the Divine Justice, "Behold Me,† let these go,‡ let their sins fall upon Me§ and the maledictions that they have deserved.‖ Let Me be anathematized for My brethren's sake."¶ *And He was*, as He had wished, and the Mighty One of Israel bent beneath the load!

Jesus felt all the agony of weariness, like a man who sees on every hand evils without remedy, difficulties without an outlet; who no longer finds in himself strength or light, and who has no hope of help from without. *Sicut homo sine adjutorio.*** And whence comes this weariness? Ah, Jesus, who in His love found out a way to render Himself present to us in all places of the earth, to descend corporeally day by day in us, in order to console us while waiting for the beatific vision of celestial happiness: Jesus, I say, found in this same love the means of depriving Himself, not of the beatific vision, but of the peacefulness of that vision. So, His holy soul, though always united to the Divinity, tasted that profound, inmost, and bitter pain which slowly consumes the denizens of Purgatory, but in a much greater degree, since He knew far better than they the greatness

* Psalm, lxxxvii. 17, 18. † Psalm, xxix. ‡ St. John, xviii.
§ 1 Kings, xxv. ‖ Gen. xxvii. ¶ Rom. ix. 3.
** Psalm, lxxxvii. 5.

of the good of which He was deprived. He languished like the newly-weaned child.* He found in Himself that overwhelming helplessness in that fearful, inexorable solitude, of which we taste somewhat when God hides His face from us. Thirsting and panting, He was like the hart long chased by the huntsman, which longeth after the fountains of living water.†

Affections.

O Jesus, I have deserved to be forever deprived of the sight of the Supreme Good. To save me from so great a misfortune, Thou deignest Thyself to taste the bitterness of this privation, which constitutes the principal torment of the reprobate, and which St. John calls the *second death.*‡ Thus was realized the word of St. Paul, "that He might taste death for all."§ Doubtless, Thy holy soul was never separated from Thy divinity, and yet it was cognizant in an ineffable manner with all that is most poignant in the *thirst after God:* "*Sitivit in Te anima Mea.*"‖ Ah, if the desire to possess God, if the consciousness of His absence was a martyrdom to St. Teresa, what didst Thou suffer in that hour, Thou accustomed to behold unveiled the Father's face? And yet I dare to murmur when for a few moments Thou hidest Thyself from my soul! O Jesus! Jesus! If I had at my disposal the hearts of all the inhabitants of heaven, I should not know how to love Thee sufficiently; I should not know how to appreciate the love Thou didst show to me in that sorrowful hour.

PRACTICE.

Endure patiently dryness and want of relish in prayer.

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* Psalm, cxxx. 2. † Psalm, xli. 2. ‡ Apoc. xx. 14.
§ Heb. ii. 9. ‖ Psalm, xli. 2.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Gethsemani—(*Continued*).

SADNESS.—THE SUBJECT OF THIS SADNESS.—AFFECTIONS.

"He began to fear and to be heavy. And He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death."—St. Mark, xiv. 33, 34.

Let us return to the Garden of Gethsemani, where the new Adam is expiating the folly of the old; and, kneeling by His side, let us meditate on His adorable weakness.*

Cœpit . . . mœstus esse. Jesus began to be sorrowful. How can the Son of God be sad? How can the cloud of sorrow veil that Heart, the Sun of Righteousness whose rising scatters the darkness which covers the face of the earth,† drives back the black spirits to their abyss, causes the tree of life and immortality to blossom,‡ and aroused Abraham in the tomb?§ What sorrow to possess Him who came to proclaim peace and happiness to those that are far off and them that are nigh?‖

Ah, we should rather inquire why He should not be sad, how indeed He could even live for thirty-three years, having ceaselessly before Him so many things to afflict Him.¶

Jesus is the only Son of God, and He sees creatures formed in the image of His Father passing their lives in outraging Him. He knows the number of all their sins, and the gravity of each in particular. Saint Catharine

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* 2 Cor. xiii. 4.
† St. Luke, i.
‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.
§ St. John, viii.
‖ Ephes. ii. 17.
¶ Psalm, xxxvii.

of Genoa fainted when the Saviour one day showed her the hideousness of a single venial sin. What sorrow, then, must the sight of so many abominations occasion the Heart of Jesus, more sensitive, more enlightened, and more loving than that of this saint!

Jesus is the brother of men, and He sees that a very great number of them are already lost, for centuries burning in hell, and destined to burn there throughout eternity.

Jesus is the head of the Church. All the children of the Church are His members, His flesh, and His bones.* He knows them all by their names,† and he foresaw that despite His passion, His death, His sacraments, His immense love, many among them would separate themselves from Him, to swell the crowd of the reprobate.

As we have said elsewhere, the human heart is naturally sensitive and compassionate. But whether it be that God has limited its sensitiveness for fear that existence would become intolerable, or, more likely, because this beautiful work has been marred by original sin, the woes of persons who are strangers to us only touch us very slightly. Thus, when a sudden catastrophe falls upon a great city, when a nocturnal fire spreads its ravages, when its buildings are ruined by earthquake, or a foreign invader penetrates through its breached wall, the trembling mother presses her young children to her breast, and, provided that these cherished pledges are not taken from her, provided that she is able to fly with them across the smoking ruins and the dead, she can comfort herself for her country's loss, or the death of a great number of her fellow-citizens.

It is then impossible for a man to form the least idea of the sufferings of the Heart of Jesus in the Garden,

* Ephes. v. 30. † St. John, x.

unless he has drawn forth from that same Heart a little of the zeal which made St. Paul exclaim, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is scandalized and I am not on fire?"* Apostolic men consoled themselves definitely, when a people or a city despised their message. They shook off the dust from their feet and departed for another city,† saying to these self-blinded ones, "Your blood be upon your own heads;‡ as for me, my hands are clean. I have neglected nothing to bring you back to repentance, I have warned you night and day. I have fought the good fight, the crown of righteousness awaits me at the end of my career.§ Each one shall bear his own burden at the tribunal of Christ."‖

It was not with Christ as with the mother alluded to. He had no fellow-citizens, all men were His brothers, the children of His blood. Not satisfied with guarding His faithful ones as the apple of His eye, and hiding them under the shadow of His wing,¶ He weeps bitterly over those whom the enemy has ravished from Him; for sinners do not cease to belong to Him. Recall the anathemas which He launches against the world because of its scandals;** His lamentations over the children of faithless Jerusalem;†† His tenderness for the perfidious Judas at the very moment when he was about to betray Him with a kiss.‡‡ Recall that touching parable in which He has depicted Himself under the figure of a poor woman who lights her lamp and sweeps the house to find the tiny piece of money which she has lost. And again as a shepherd seeking his wandering

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* 2 Cor. xi. 29.
† Acts, xiii. 51.
‡ Acts, xviii. 6.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.
‖ Rom. xiv. 12.
¶ Deut. xxxii. 10, 11.
** St. Matt. xviii.
†† St. Luke, xix.
‡‡ St. Matt. xxvi.

sheep, leaving the ninety and nine in the fold to run after it; bringing it back upon his shoulders, filled with joy, and assembling his friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."* Recall, in short, that famous story of the prodigal, in which Jesus seems to intimate that the just might be jealous at beholding the caresses bestowed upon a returning sinner.† He Himself says that the conversion of a single sinner causes Him a livelier joy than the perseverance of ninety-nine just ones. Is not this saying everything?

It was not with Jesus as with His apostles. Paul could comfort himself up to a certain point, respecting the obstinacy of a people while working for the conversion of another people. But the conversion of one sinner, while rejoicing the Heart of Jesus, does not console it for the loss of another. Paul is *debtor* to all peoples,‡ Jesus is the *Father* of all mankind. St. Paul had begotten the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Philippians, and some others through the Gospel.§ Jesus had begotten all men through the cross. St. John Chrysostom has compared the heart of the great apostle to the terrestrial globe. But however large it was, that heart had its limits. The Heart of Jesus has none. Paul had not been crucified for his dear Corinthians;‖ Jesus was crucified for all.¶ On the day of His incarnation, His Father had offered Him joy,** that is, pleasures, glory, honor, riches, a life easy and agreeable; but Jesus replied *Da mihi animas*, "Give Me souls."†† The Eternal Father then showed Him at what a cost

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* St. Luke, xv. 6.
† St. Luke, xv.
‡ Rom. i. 14.
§ 1 Cor. iv. 15.
‖ 1 Cor. i. 13.
¶ 2 Cor. v. 15.
** Heb. xii. 2.
†† Gen. xiv.

He would have to purchase them; and Jesus answered *Presto sum:* "Behold Me!" I am ready, command Me. And the Eternal Father ordained Him to die, and Jesus became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

This is why His Father gave Him all nations for an inheritance;† and since that moment, Jesus ceases not to cry: *Affer, affer!* Bring to me, bring to me those souls which I have purchased with the price of My blood!‡ He never says, It is enough, I am now at the end of My course, the fight is over, the crown of justice awaits Me. But, *Animas! animas!* Souls, souls! the souls that are Mine. I thirst for them, *Sitio!*§ For Him, therefore, there are neither Jews, nor Greeks, nor barbarians; there are but men, and all men are His flesh and bone.‖ He became the surety of all.¶ He is answerable for the salvation of all. He must give account to His Father of all those that were confided to Him, and if one of them is lost, He deems Himself obliged to excuse Himself in some sort: "Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled."** When, therefore, a soul is lost, it is Jesus's loss. It is upon Him, upon his loving Heart, that the blood of that soul falls. This is why He prayed so much, labored and suffered so much. This is why He took upon Himself the infirmities of all, and bore the sickness of all.†† This is why He became like a shrub born in a sterile and arid soil, yea, like a leper;‡‡ why He con-

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* Phil. ii. 8.
† Psalm, ii. 8.
‡ Acts, xx. 28.
§ St. John, xix. 28.
‖ Ephes. v. 30.
¶ 1 Tim. ii. 6.
** St. John, xvii. 12.
†† Isaias, liii. 4.
‡‡ Isaias, liii. 3, 4.

sented to be rejected, spat upon by the Jews, buffeted, scourged by the Romans, smitten and broken by His own Father,* and placed in the category of malefactors. This is why He took upon Himself the iniquities of us all, the crimes of us all: why, in short, He made Himself the receptacle, and, if I may dare to say so, the sink of all the miseries, wounds, sins, and abominations of poor humanity. This term, O Christian soul, may perhaps strike you as irreverent. Well, let us change it, and substitute for it a word which St. Paul very frequently employs, and say, This is why He became *a curse* for us. Or, giving all the forcibleness of the Greek text (it is Bossuet's remark), He became *an execration* for us all.

But if, even at such a price, He had been able to save all mankind! But no. Many—a large number, an infinite number—will be lost. *Pauci vero electi.*† You may say, perhaps, But is it not He Himself who rejects and chastises them? can He then grieve over their loss? Yes. What father is there who has not sometimes shed secret tears, after seeing himself obliged to chastise his son severely? But do you still say, Does not Jesus hate sinners, at least when He has condemned them? And can one hate and weep for the same individual at one and the same time? No. Jesus does not hate the lost in themselves. He hates them only as incorrigible sinners, but as His creatures He loves them still. "For Thou lovest all things that are," says the wise man, "and hatest none of the things which Thou hast made, O Lord who lovest souls."‡ He loves them, yet sees Himself compelled by His justice to repulse them and smite them eternally. Doubtless, as God, He is inaccessible to every sort of regret, but His Heart, the most

* Isaias, liii. † St. Matt. xx. 16. ‡ Wisdom, xi. 25, 27.

sensitive of human hearts, feels, or rather felt during His mortal life, and particularly in Gethsemani, an unspeakable sorrow at their loss. He wept over them all generally, and over each one individually, because they were lost,—lost without remedy, lost forever: *Quia non sunt.**

In order that you may have no doubt, dear reader, of His sorrow, listen, He will speak Himself. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." That is to say, I experience anguish and mortal fear; My heart has attained the paroxysm of suffering, and, unable to support any more, breaks. And to whom does He say this? Is it to His disciples only? No, but to all men; to you who peruse these lines: and it was for this that He willed that these words should be written by two evangelists. And why does He say it? That His disciples may comfort Him? Alas! He knows that these coarse men will leave Him to tread the wine-press alone † and go to sleep. Why then? That you may know how much you have cost Him, and that at least out of compassion for Him you might save your soul, and not add your own loss to the sorrow which the loss of so many others has already caused Him; that henceforth you may flee from sin, and the occasions in which you have so many times fallen into sin, from the enemies who have so often snatched you from His arms.

This is why He adds, "Stay you here, and watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

When St. John Chrysostom desired to retire into solitude, and to part from his mother Anthusa, already an aged woman, and a widow since the birth of this beloved son, she took him by the hand and led him to her room, and causing him to sit by her side upon the very bed

* Jer. xxxi. 15. † Isaias, lxiii. 3.

where she received him in her arms and printed on his brow her first kiss, she took him by the hand, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "O my son, do not make me a widow for the second time!" *

Thus, O Christian soul, when thou art tempted to leave thy Saviour and Father, to yield to the impulse of passion, to form acquaintance with persons of questionable principles and easy morals, to risk your salvation to shine, or to become rich, to read such and such a book where faith and modesty are sacrificed, to follow shameful fashions, and to wear dresses whose shape was certainly decided upon in the councils of Satan, and which the pagans of ancient Rome would have consigned to the bad place; when you are invited to frequent those schools of immorality and impiety called theatres, to give yourself up to those infamous amusements, to those dances which an Athenian pagan would never have allowed to his wife or daughter, and whose every detail suggests the cunning of the demon of lust; when, in a word, you are induced to follow the track of large numbers in the broad road which leadeth to destruction,† imagine that your Father, your Saviour takes you by the hand and conducts you to Gethsemani. He introduces you into the grotto of the agony, and there, all in tears, causes you to hear this mournful complaint: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death! My son, or My daughter, remember My groanings, take pity upon Me who gave My life for thee, even here, by My sorrows. Tarry here, watch with Me, for fear that thou enter into temptation and become lost forever. Oh, if I have ever loved thee, if I have preferred thy happiness to Mine own repose, thy life to Mine own, I entreat thee go not away from Me, do not rend My heart by taking

* "De Sacerd." † St. Matt. vii. 13.

from Me a child that has cost Me so dear. Alas! I have already lost too many. Renew not, then, My anguish, plunge Me not again into a sorrow which I have not deserved!"

*Affections and Prayers.**

O Heart of the tenderest and most compassionate of Fathers! Thou didst forget Thyself to think only upon the misery of ingrates who despised Thee. The sight of their reprobation overwhelms Thee with sadness. Ah, since this is so, suffer me not to perish! Thy sorrow is large enough without being augmented by the foreknowledge of my loss. Open my ears that I may hear Thy voice. Open my eyes that I may see Thy example. Open my lips that I may sing Thy mercies. Soften my heart that it may feel Thy sorrow, and may dread everything that might renew it. Grant, O Life of my soul, that I may feel all that Thou feelest; that I may weep over my wanderings as Thou weepest over them; that I may seek Thee as Thou seekest me. Or rather, my God, I ask nothing from Thee, I abandon myself to Thy love. Lead me; change me; bind me; purify me; form me as Thou wilt, and suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

O most holy Mother of God, who during that cruel night didst feel all the torments that were preparing for thy beloved Son, let me share in the feelings of thine afflicted heart that I may detest in myself the cause of His sorrows!

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* Taken from the Works of Father Thomas of Jesus.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Gethsemani—(*Continued*).

PRAYER OF JESUS.—THE CHALICE OR PICTURE OF THE PASSION.—AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"And going a little further, He fell upon His face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."—Matt. xxvi. 39.

Behold Jesus prostrate with His face touching the ground. That brow, whose radiance rejoices the angels, now laid in the dust! In that humble posture He seems to say to His Father: I know that, like other men, I am but dust and ashes. The Heart of the Son of Man is not exalted* in the glory to which Thou hast raised Me.† Jesus has not forgotten His humble origin. In Thy turn, O Lord, deign to remember that I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaiden,‡ and reject not my prayer.

Jesus is about to pray. Silence! Hear, O Heaven, the prayer of thy Creator; and thou Earth, the vile and arid earth of my heart, receive like a healthful dew the words of thy humiliated Lord.§ Doubtless His suppliant voice will be melancholy and sad like that of the prophet seated amid the ruins of Sion, but it will be more harmonious than that of the seraphim. It will be like the song of the swan, the last melody of the Sacred Heart in trouble. Ah, if a simple mortal's prayer could

* Psalm, viii. ‡ Psalm, cxxx. ‡ Psalm, cxv.
§ Deut. xxxii.

open the heavens after three years of drought, and restore its verdure and its harvests to the earth,* that which is about to issue from the broken Heart † of the God-man will doubtless open the treasury of Divine Goodness and cause to rain down floods of mercy and of peace.‡

Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from Me." What! can such words have already exhausted all the feeling which fill such a heart at this supreme moment? And during three long hours He repeats none other! He is like the child dying with hunger in the streets of desolated Jerusalem, which has only strength to cry, "Bread! bread!" § Let us lovingly gather up and meditate carefully upon each one of these words; the fewer they are, and the more often He repeats them, the dearer and more precious they ought to be to us.

Remark at the outset that it is no longer for us, but for Himself, that He invokes His Father. Thus we behold the High-Priest and Son of God reduced to pray with tears, to pray for Himself.‖

But upon what claim does He rest and expect to be heard? Does He say, as heretofore, "My Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do"?¶ No, He dares no longer to plead His right to His Father's love, for the iniquities of the world have seized upon Him, more in number than the hairs of His head; they have hidden heaven from His view,** and confusion covers His face.††

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* St. James, v.
‡ Isaias, xlviii.
‖ Heb. v.
** Psalm, xxxvii., xxxix.
† Psalm, l.
§ Lam. ii.
¶ St. John, xvii. 4.
†† Psalm, lxviii.

He can only have recourse to that mercy which never faileth any,* which the guiltiest may call to their aid,† which at the bottom of his dungeon even the impious Manasses invoked not in vain.‡ No, He does not say, Hear Me, do My will, since I have ever done Thine; but He says: Hear Me, *if it be possible.*

If it be possible! O my God, have I understood aright? What can there be impossible to the Most High?§ Hast Thou not said Thyself, O Eternal Truth, "Ask and it shall be given you: seek and you shall find: knock and it shall be opened to you"?‖ *If it be possible!* But what is there that is impossible, even to man, provided he has faith? Hast Thou not said, O Jesus, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence thither, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you,"¶ "All things are possible to him that believeth"?**

But He seems to reply: Yes, but I am a worm, and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people.††

O Jesus! Jesus! Is it thus that Thou dost humiliate Thyself? Behold Thee reduced to the level of that dust in which, according to prophecy, Thou hast laid Thy sacred brow.‡‡

What is it that He asks of His Father? Does He say, as He did on quitting the scene of the Last Supper, Glorify Thy Son?§§ Oh, no. Such a prayer would not become Him at this moment. "The Lord hath laid on

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* Joel, ii.
‡ 2 Paral. xxxiii. 13.
‖ St. Matt. vii. 7.
** St. Mark, ix.
‡‡ Lam. iii. 29.
† Psalm, xxiv.
§ St. Luke, i.
¶ St. Matt. xvii.
†† Psalm, xxi. 7.
§§ St. John, xvii. 1.

Him the iniquity of us all," * and since that He sees in Him no longer His beloved Son, but only sin,† and is determined to bruise Him in His infirmity.‡ In one word, He has condemned Him to death. Can a condemned person say to his judge, "Glorify me"? No, that would be to defy him, and to protest against the sentence. If he dares to ask anything, it is his pardon, his life. So, our sweet Jesus, our hostage, our ransom, the Lamb who bore our crimes, recognizes as just the sentence which falls upon Him. But aghast at the sight of His torment, He implores the Lord to use His power over life and death in His behalf. To spare Him for pity's sake, not as His Son, but as His creature, His servant.§ And if He addresses this irritated Judge by the name of Father, it is the more effectually to move the heart of Him who has taught the most wretched to say each day, "Our Father, who art in heaven!"

"Let this chalice pass from Me!" What is this cup which the Divine Justice presents to our Divine Patient, the very thought of which causes Him to shudder? Undoubtedly this is a great mystery. It must have been very bitter for the Heart of Jesus, so generous, so eager for the salvation of men, to revolt at the sight of it, and repulse it with horror. Among other things of which this fearful drink was composed, there is the death which He must suffer. Not the quick and glorious death of brave men, like Jonathan or Judas Machabeus, but atrocious, tedious, shameful, the death of the wicked,—an infamous execution! ‖

Have you at any time, O Christian soul, reflected upon the appalling significance of those simple words which you repeat every day: "*I believe in Jesus Christ*

* Isaias, liii. 6. † 2 Cor. v. ‡ Isaias, liii. 10.
§ Phil. ii. 7. ‖ Isaias, liii.

our Lord; who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried"? Forget for a moment, if you choose, that He was God, and behold in Him only a man, but a man well-born, innocent, virtuous, and sensitive, and say if there is not in these words sufficient to revolt His Heart in every sense.

In an hour armed soldiers are coming to arrest Him like a thief in the midst of the darkness. Their guide will be one of His own, His man of business, whose feet He has just washed, whom He had sought to touch by special attentions, and who had quitted the farewell feast to go and sell Him. Thirty pieces of silver is the price set on His head. They have pledged each other, and the traitor's kiss is the signal agreed upon to point Him out to the servants, only partially lighted by the torches. Seized by them, bound and carefully pinioned, on the advice of the parricide Judas, He sees Himself abandoned by all His disciples and friends, and will be dragged, God knows in what manner, to the city.

Twice during that same night He will appear before a tribunal, to all appearance regular, and composed of all that was most authoritative and illustrious in Judea. They proceed with hypocritical decorum, but yet allow a servant to strike Him under the very eyes of the high-priest. Questioned by Caiphas, the high-priest for the current year, He is the first to confess, in a solemn manner, His mission and divinity, and upon His own words is adjudged worthy of death as a blasphemer by the unanimous vote of the members of the Sanhedrim. He appears so odious, that His judges deem that they honor their rank by following in the steps of Phinees, and becoming His insulters and executioners.

He will pass the night standing and bound, despite His fatigue and excessive weakness, given into the

hands of a troop of heartless servants, as wicked and far less cautious than their masters. They mingle His name in the songs of their orgy, drinking wine by the light of a large fire. They bandage His eyes, strike Him in the face, pluck out the hairs of His beard, and treat Him with a barbarity before which the pen of the evangelist recoils. In their midst is found the chief of His disciples, the principal pillar of the edifice He has founded, talking, reasoning, warming himself with the rabble during a whole hour at least; thrice denying his Master when only two paces from Him, and swearing that he had never known "*this man of whom you speak.*"

At daybreak, a fresh trial and a fresh sentence. He is led, with His hands tied, before the Roman magistrate, without whose orders no person can be put to death. He is represented as a seditious person, pretending to royal power, and forbidding to pay tribute to Cæsar, and causing disorder among the people. Pilate learns that He is a Galilean, and sends Him to the incestuous Herod, the murderer of the friend of Jesus, John the Baptist. Herod makes Him his plaything, the plaything of his guards, and sends Him back to Pilate clad in white, like a stage king, a not very formidable pretender. Pilate, not knowing what to do, orders Him to be scourged, in order to give satisfaction to the Jewish princes.*

Meanwhile, approaching the tribunal with loud cries, the populace demand the liberation of one of the convicts pining in the dungeons, according to the custom at the feast of the Passover. Ordinarily, Pilate permits them to choose from among the prisoners,† but out of regard for Jesus, this time he limits their choice between

* St. Luke, xxiii. † St. Mark, xv. 6.

Jesus,—whose sole crime, it seems to him, is having aroused the envy of the great,—and a scoundrel, named Barabbas, generally detested for his offences. This clever expedient did not succeed. All the advantage that accrued to Jesus from this ignominious comparison, was to see the thief preferred to Himself.* The people, gained over by the princes, would not allow Jesus to live even as a pardoned criminal. And out of hatred to Jesus, they become suddenly reconciled to Barabbas, and demand him, Barabbas the rioter;† Barabbas the notable bandit;‡ Barabbas the murderer;§ and despite the observations of Pilate upon the innocence of Jesus, they cry with one voice: "Not this man, but Barabbas." And Barabbas will live from having the good fortune to be placed side by side with Jesus. He will be at once released, received enthusiastically by the crowd, and this happy favorite will be carried in triumph under the very eyes of Jesus, as hero of the feast, the representative for that year of the Israelites brought out of Egypt by Moses.

During this scene, the sentence of flogging pronounced against Jesus is carried out. The executioners strip Him and drag Him along with loud cries to a pillar used for this Roman punishment. They fasten His hands and feet with straps; then they strike Him with rods, and thongs of leather garnished with lead. They only cease their blows at the precise point when more would kill Him. These executioners are Roman soldiers, the mortal foes of all who bear the name of king; and the Jews, to stimulate their cruelty, have told them that Jesus has pretensions to the throne. Not satisfied with having made His blood to flow, they drench

* St. John, xviii.
† St. Mark, xv. 7.
‡ St. Matt. xxvii. 16.
§ St. Luke, xxiii. 19.

Him with indignities. One of them, amid the loud applause of the rest, proposes to decorate Him with the insignia of royalty, the object of His desires. For this hideous ceremony *the whole cohort** is convened by sound of trumpet. He is stripped a second time of His garments, and upon His mangled shoulders they cast an old and soiled military great-coat as a royal mantle; for crown they place upon His head a wreath of thorns; and in His hand a reed for a sceptre. Then the cohort, composed of six hundred men, files past. Each one, at the roll call, comes forward to pay homage to this new king, according to the ceremonial prescribed by a centurion. Each one, as he passes before Him, bends the knee, exclaiming: "Hail! King of the Jews," then rising, gives Him a blow, spits in His face, takes the reed and strikes Him upon the head, so as to drive in the thorns, then replaces it in His hand. And all these cruelties are accompanied by the bursts of laughter and the jests of the guard.†

Meanwhile, the people, for a short time engaged with the triumph of Barabbas, reapproach the judgment-seat. Pilate is compelled to rescue Jesus from the hands of the soldiers. And this Roman, whose cruelty is known throughout Judea,‡ is himself touched at the pitiable condition of the criminal, for he tries to move the Jews by exhibiting Him to them; He causes Him to ascend a balcony with His mantle and His crown, and says to the Jews, now becoming more riotous and enraged: "Behold the Man!" That is to say, the Man whom you delivered to me as a seditious person, is He not punished enough? You see, He has hardly a breath of life remaining; let Him give it forth in peace; what evil can He do now? But his voice is drowned in a thunderous

* St. Matt. xxvii. † *Ibid.* ‡ St. Luke, xiii.

cry,* "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"† "Take ye Him and crucify Him; as for me, I find no fault in Him." But "We have a law which condemns Him to death because He made Himself the Son of God." Frightened by these words, Pilate causes Jesus to re-enter the Prætorium, and questions Him respecting the secret of His birth. Struck by His grave replies and His superhuman calmness, he tries again to release Him. He brings Him again before the judgment-seat and says to the Jews: "Behold your King!" "Away with Him, away with Him from our sight, crucify Him!" "Shall I crucify your King?" And this people, so fond of liberty, so impatient of the foreign yoke, and always ready to believe the first impostor that called himself the Christ, the expected liberator,‡ this people replies, "We have no king but Cæsar."§ This Cæsar was no other than the horrible Tiberias! Pilate, in answer to his wife's prayers, tries a last effort. He washes his hands before the multitude, exclaiming: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it." And then bursts forth the fearful and fatal imprecation, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!"‖

Finally, Jesus beholds Himself abandoned by the cowardly governor to the rage of His enemies. He hears a clerk read out His sentence, pronounced as if it had been just, in the name of the senate and people of Rome, and containing a long statement of His alleged crimes. He hears the populace shout with joy at its reading. Instantly they tear Him away, trampling the bloody insignia of His mock royalty under foot, excepting the crown. They throw Him His own garments,

* St. John, xix; St. Luke, xxiii.
† St. John, xix. ‡ St. John, v, Acts, v.
§ St. John, xix. 15. ‖ St. Matt. xxvii. 25.

and hardly leaving Him sufficient time to cover His hideous wounds, He is dragged along by a rope around His neck, with the gibbet on His shoulders, to the abhorred spot where the execrable bones of executed criminals are bleaching.

On arriving, after many falls, and many blows and insults, He sees Himself despoiled for the third and last time of His garments, by executioners of brutal aspect, in whom familiarity with blood has extinguished pity, and who slaughter their victims while gambling. Those garments, the last pledge of the tenderness of the poor widow, His Mother, the tunic woven by her, and the mantle by right belong to them. It is their salary. They tear them, divide them, and cast lots for them under the victim's eyes.* He must receive at their hands, and carry to His faltering lips, the fatal vessel containing wine and myrrh, from which so many criminals before Him had taken their last drink.† He sees the executioners digging the hole in the ground while singing, plant the cross, that infamous gibbet, not only the cruelest instrument of death, but also the most shameful, making even innocence itself disgraceful,‡ and which has no equivalent in the wheel or the cord. A ladder is reared, and at the imperative gesture of the executioner, He mounts, accompanied by the curses and howlings of the crowd. He mounts, bearing with Him our sins, all the offences, past and future, of the world, and in addition the parricide of Judas. While He prays for His executioners,§ they fasten His hands and His feet to the wood with large nails. Then they affix over His head an inscription in great red characters, indicating in the three principal languages of the earth His

* St. John, xix. 24.
† St. Matt. xxvii. 34.
‡ Deut. ii.
§ St. Luke, xxiii. 34.

name, the name of His city, and His crime.* In order that nothing should be lacking to His disgrace, two bandits, for a long time the terror of the country, who more than once plundered and murdered travellers upon the high road between Jerusalem and Jericho, have been brought with Him.† Despite the lateness of the hour,‡ and the approach of the Sabbath, they are affixed at the same time to gibbets like His own, reserving to Him the central place,§ as if He was their chief and the guiltiest of the three. And so He remains, enduring all that a man can endure in his body, in his soul, in his honor, one hour: two hours: three hours!

Jesus has become pre-eminently *the Man of sorrows.* While His blood falls drop by drop to the ground to purify the world ‖ and pay the ransom of men,¶ He sees the scribes, the chiefs of the people and of the priests, insulting His agony.** They point Him out with their finger to the crowd hurrying from the city, and say to the passers-by, "Behold the one who made Himself the Son of God!" They reproach Him with His miracles as witchcraft, with His doctrine and prophecies as impostures. They repeat His words with distorted meaning, they challenge Him to come down from the cross, and conclude from His powerlessness that He never healed any save by magic.

Thus He beholds Himself dishonored, accursed, execrated by a whole people, outraged even by one of the companions of His sufferings. His death, like that of monsters born for the misfortune of humanity, will be regarded as a public benefit. Not a soul in that crowd dare open his lips in His defence. Not one of

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* St. John, xix. 19, 20.
† St. Luke, xxiii.
‡ St. Matt. xxvii.
§ St. John, xix.
‖ Col. i.
¶ *Ibid.*
** St. Luke, xxiii.

those whom He has healed, comforted, consoled, resurrected, dare say to the iniquitous judge, "This was a righteous man!" He is even deserted by His friends and disciples.

In truth, to the honor of humanity, to the immortal glory of their sex, a few courageous women remain at the foot of the cross, with one faithful friend and a virgin.* This virgin was His mother, yet she cannot wipe His brow as of yore, nor offer Him a drop of water, nor dress His wounds, nor press Him in her arms. The presence of Mary is to Him an additional torture. He sees her roughly treated by the brutal soldiery, He hears her insulted by His enemies. When the daughters of Jerusalem ran to this sad sight and asked "Who is that weeping woman standing by the central cross?" some one would answer, "That is the mother of Jesus Himself, the false prophet and blasphemer."

To crown His sorrow, He beholds Himself abandoned by His Father, and loaded with His malediction. He invokes Him, but receives no reply.†

When Jesus has satisfied the divine wrath; when He has fulfilled all the prophecies even to the last by asking for and drinking the vinegar;‡ when His thorn-charged head bows, His breast chill and livid,§ as if to give the kiss of peace unto our ransomed souls; when His heart has ceased to beat, and His afflicted soul, obedient unto the end, descends into the abode of the dead; when His expiring cry has converted His executioners, and the crowd go away striking their breasts; when the sun, the earth, the rocks, the tombs themselves render homage to His innocence and proclaim His divinity, there will still be men found to call him "*this seducer.*"‖

* St. John, xix. 25. † St. Mark, xv.; Psalm, xxi.
‡ St. John, xix. § *Ibid.* ‖ St. Matt. xxvii. 63.

In short, His body, according to the law itself, is regarded as an unclean thing, which must be made to disappear ere the setting of the sun, not to disturb the great Sabbath.* They beg Pilate to take Him away, and lest He still breathe, they pierce His heart through with a lance! †

Behold here the terrible images that passed at this moment before the eyes of Jesus! Behold here some drops of the cup presented to Him. Say now, O Friend of the Sacred Heart, is it astonishing if He hesitates to accept it? If He humbly asks of His Father the favor of not drinking it?

Affections.

And yet, O Jesus, I hear Thee add immediately, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done"! O obedience, O respect of a God for the will of His Father! How much cause Thou hadst to say to Thy disciples, O divine Master, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work"! ‡ But O love of a God for men, for vile sinners, for criminals proscribed and doomed to a twofold death! Thou, innocence and holiness itself, didst take upon Thee their iniquities, the penalty they merited, in order that the Eternal Father might become to them gracious and merciful, and receive them to His bosom, while in a manner He became cruel toward Thee. § How just was Thy saying, O Jesus, "I am the good Shepherd, the good shepherd giveth His life for his sheep." O good Shepherd, who to save my life didst expose Thyself to the fangs of the wolf, I adore Thee in Thy abasement, in Thy terrors, in Thy weariness, in Thy mortal sad-

* St. John, xix. 31.
† St. John, xix. 34.
‡ St. John, iv. 34.
§ Job, xxx.

ness! I thank Thee, I bless Thee, I love Thee! But I would as far as my weakness will allow me, aided by Thy grace, follow the admirable examples which Thou hast left me. I will henceforth have no will but that of Thy Father, who, through Thee, has become mine. I heartily accept every suffering which it shall please Him to send me. And if at times the drink seems too bitter, I will say with Thee, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me." But instantly I will reflect upon Thy generosity, I will invoke Thy succor, and if I were to expire under it, I will add, "Nevertheless, O my Father, may Thy will, and not mine, be done!" Amen.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Gethsemani—(*Continued*).

THE PRAYER OF THE SAVIOUR REMAINS UNANSWERED.—WHY DID JESUS ASK THAT THE CHALICE MIGHT PASS AWAY FROM HIM?—THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS.—THE SAINTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.—ST. ANDREW AND THE SAINTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.—AFFECTIONS.

"They" (our fathers) "cried to Thee and they were saved. But I am a worm and no man."—Psalm, xxi. 6, 7.

"In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture, . . . all the sinners of the earth shall drink it.—Psalm, lxxiv. 9, 10.

"That He" (Jesus) "might taste death for all."—Heb. ii. 9.

We have already seen Jesus, our sweet and holy Victim, a prey to terror, weariness, and sadness. We have seen passing before His eyes the horrible phantoms which carried fear to His Heart. We have tried to measure the depth and the breadth of that cup which the Divine Justice presented to Him, to tell how bitter were its inexhaustible dregs, originally intended to be shared among all the sinners of the earth,* and which Jesus, their ransom, was henceforth compelled to drink alone. In short, we have heard the prayer, at once so touching, so humble, and so resigned, wrung from the Lamb by His excessive sorrows: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me."

But have we heard as well, the heavenly Father's voice

* Psalm, lxxv.

speaking from the midst of the darkness to reassure this affrighted Heart, to console this afflicted Heart? Has the Eternal said, as of yore, on the banks of Jordan and upon the summit of Thabor, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"? Has He at least said such a word as any father would address to a son intimidated by the difficulties which environ the path of duty: "Courage! suffering is soon over, and glory endures"? Alas! no. The Father has remained silent and severe. The Father has placed before His face the thick cloud of our crimes, and the prayer of the God-man, the Divine Suppliant, could not pass through.* Thus, while God is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, and grants the prayers of them that fear Him,† He does not accede to the humble desires of His only Son! Through Jesus, every prayer issuing from a human heart, even though it came from the profundity of the abyss, ‡ penetrates surely to the highest heavens, yet Jesus one day prayed with tears, Jesus prayed with His face in the dust, Jesus prayed for Himself, and His prayer was rejected! § The Eternal Father bows His ear to the cry of the young ravens that clamor to Him for food, and yet He closes it to the distressful cry which His Son raises to Him. *Ad te clamaverunt, et salvi facti sunt. . . . Ego autem sum vermis*, "They cried out to Thee and were saved. But I am a worm."

And why? Because, through our sins we deserved that the Most High should reject our prayers, and through our obstinacy, our delight in sin, we deserved that our prayers should be regarded as fresh offences: *Oratio ejus fiat in peccatum.* To save us from this frightful misfortune, Jesus willed to endure the affront, so

* Lam. iii. 44.
† Psalm, cxliv.
‡ Psalm, cxxix.
§ Psalm, lxxxvii.

cruel for such a Son, to see His prayers repulsed by His Father. I say, *Jesus willed this.* For although from His trembling lips escaped the cry, "Let this chalice pass from Me," His Heart was none the less an accomplice of the Divine Mercy that desired the salvation of sinners, and of the Divine Justice which exacted the rigorous expiation of sin.

The Son of God did not forget that upon the deplorable day which saw our primal ruin when Mercy, in mourning, and Justice, armed with its sword, were about to separate irrevocably, He stayed them for a moment, and gave them a meeting upon Calvary. He knew that they would never embrace save at the foot of the cross, and that He alone could make the advances, and provide the cost of their reconciliation. For four thousand years He had been the object of the desires of impatient humanity, and at last He resolved to descend. He was proclaimed upon earth as the Liberator of captives, the Physician of the broken-hearted, the Restorer of salvation. And now the hour had arrived for keeping His word, could He turn back? So after saying "Let this chalice pass," He immediately adds, as if He feared to be heard, "nevertheless, Thy will be done!" And what did the Father will, if not the death of Jesus? The first part of this prayer, "let this chalice pass," that is to say, "let Me not die," was the cry of His mortal flesh, feeble in Him as in other men, and terrified at the sight of torment. The second: "Thy will be done,"—that is to say, "let Me die," was the cry of His generous Heart, of that Heart which could not consent to abandon us, but desired our salvation at any price. Of that Heart whose love, stronger than death, could not be extinguished by the waters of sorrow, though vast as the ocean,

Let me remark, dear reader, that nowhere is the Heart of Jesus so completely unreserved. Nowhere does He show how much He loved men so much as in Gethsemani.

Still there remains here one difficulty to surmount. Jesus, being at once our Master and our Example, ought to practise what He teaches. Now, He desires that we, frail reeds as we are, should rejoice in tribulation. Did He not say: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, when they shall cast you out of their company, when they shall despitefully entreat you for the Son of man's sake; rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy"? Did He not come to say to the poor, to those who hunger and thirst, to those who are despoiled, to the despised, who are smitten and tortured and murdered, to all those, in short, whom the world calls unfortunate,—the world is wrong,—"You are happy, rejoice ye"? *Beati, . . . gaudete!*

How is it, then, that Jesus betrays so keen a dread of suffering, insult, and death? If He succumbed beneath the load, who then dare present his shoulders to bear it? If He found the cup too bitter, who dare even put his lips to it? If He so dreaded the cross and death, who will feel sufficiently strong to confront them with joy? O good Master, art Thou deceived? For either sorrow and death are an evil: and then why expect Thy disciples to rejoice at them? Or, on the contrary, they are a good: and in this case, why didst not Thou here, as everywhere else, join example to precept and rejoice to suffer and to die?

This is the solution of the problem. Suffering and death are not intrinsically good in themselves. As the Wise Man says, it was not God who created death.*

* Wisdom, ii. 23, 24.

Sorrow and death are the result of a poison deposited in our veins by sin. Man was not created to suffer and to die, but to live and to be happy. This is why Nature abhors death and all that leads to it. Look at the saints of the Old Testament. Look at Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Ezechias, Jeremias. Look at the great Elias himself. They doubtless suffered patiently, but they did not go so far as to rejoice in their sufferings. And, in fact, neither the law nor the prophets exacted of men so sublime a virtue. But under the Law of Grace it is otherwise. Jesus Christ might well enjoin us to love suffering and death because He was about to transform them. By suffering He has embalmed suffering; by carrying the cross and staining it with His blood He has taken from it its horrors. By tasting death He has taken away its bitterness and broken its sting.* He has left upon the scourge, and the nails, and the thorns, and insults, something of Himself, like an aroma, an emanation from His divine person. To-day, when we suffer lovingly, when with a good heart we ascend our Calvary, we feel that God has been there, and instead of walking with sighs, we run to the odor of His perfumes. Piously enamored of His attractions, we little heed the thorns with which the path bristles, but which were blunted in the flesh of a God. We fear no longer those brambles to which we see adhere the ensanguined shreds of the garments of the Immaculate Lamb. We no longer fear to be hurt by those flintstones whose jagged points tore the feet of the God-man. In wounding us, those thorns, those briars, those sharp stones, in a manner inoculate us with the divine blood with which they are still empurpled. Inebriated with love, and beside one's self, when at last

* 1 Cor. xv. 57; Osee, xiii. 14.

the summit of the holy mount is reached, we cry: *Verberaverunt me, sed non dolui: traxerunt me, et ego non sensi*, "They have beaten me, but I was not sensible to pain: they drew me" in the mire, among the stones of the rugged path, "and I felt not."*

Look at Peter, who, not satisfied with following his Divine Master upon the cross according to the promise which he had received from Jesus Himself,† asks that they may add to his martyrdom, or rather to his happiness, by crucifying him with his head downward. Hear in what terms his blessed brother Andrew, conducted to execution, saluted the cross prepared for him. It is like the nuptial song of some impassioned lover as he goes to seek his betrothed, to lead her to the altar. No sooner did he perceive it, though afar off, than he cried, "O cherished cross! O thou adorned with the attractions which the limbs of Christ have left thee! O cross, which I have so long desired, for which I have felt all the disquietude of love, thou which I have followed without relenting, here thou art at length presented to my gaze, to crown all my wishes. Receive me from the hands of men, and render me to my Maker, that through thee He may receive me, who by thee has bought me." And when he was fastened by iron chains to this object of all his wishes, he began to preach his Master before the affected throng, and he lived thus not one hour, nor two hours, but two days. When the tyrant offered him deliverance on condition of denying Jesus Christ, "Ah," he replied, "if like me you knew the mystery of the cross, rather than ask me to quit it, you would embrace it yourself." And when his hearers, touched by his divine eloquence, and still more by his marvellous courage, asked to have him

* Prov. xxiii. 35. † St. John, xxi.

taken down, and reiterated their demand with loud cries to the judge, Andrew, like a young bridegroom about to be torn from the arms of his bride, besought them urgently not to deprive him of his happiness. Then, raising his eyes to heaven, "O Lord," he cried, "permit not the impious judge to separate me from Thy cross at the very moment when I relish its delights! O Christ, Thou art my Master: if I have loved Thee and acknowledged Thee as my God; if I have confessed Thy name before men, grant me this favor, the only recompense I implore of Thy goodness here below."*

It is necessary to allude to St. Lawrence, who, extended upon the burning brazier, rallied his judges, and preached Jesus Christ to the pagans with the same freedom as if he were lying upon a bed of roses. And the great Bishop Ignatius, when brought to Rome to be given up to wild beasts, trembles lest the faithful of that city should use their influence to close to him the path of martyrdom, and implores them in a letter not to hinder him from *enjoying the lions.*

Perhaps some one may say, Such sentiments are not appropriate to this age. Alas! it is true that they are very rare to-day, as are the souls wholly on fire with divine love, and who, consumed with holy ardor, sigh after sufferings as many others sigh after carnal pleasures. But, thanks be to God, there are still some of them, and the devotion of the Sacred Heart is precisely adapted to increase every day this *little flock.*† It remains with you, O pious soul, to become one of its number, and to obtain the happy experience of that state, so worthy of emulation, of which we have been speaking. "*Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land*

* Breviary. † St. Luke, xii. 32.

which I will show thee," saith the Lord.* Which, after the Gospel manner, means, Detach your heart from earth, and from all the affections of flesh and blood. Renounce your own self, your senses, and every sensual habit. Transfer all your interests to heaven, and live by anticipation in this promised land,† through an active faith, an ardent hope, and a generous charity, and soon you will see the kingdom of God established in you. God will come to you,‡ because you will be prepared to receive Him, and then you will taste how sweet He is.§ And thus, loving God as the saints have loved Him, you will in your turn understand the *mystery of the cross.* You will relish the wisdom of that reply of the saint, when Jesus Christ asked him to name a recompense for his services: "My reward, O Lord, will be to suffer and be despised for Thy sake." And what is more desirable than to find one's felicity in a thing so common here below, so easily encountered, and which nobody will envy you or ever deprive you of—I mean the cross, suffering, contempt.

But let us return to our subject, and re-assert that if the chalice of tribulations has become so sweet, so inebriating to faithful souls, it is because Jesus drank nearly all its gall, and left upon the edge of the cup the honey which distilled from His sacred lips.‖ Jesus suffered in the place of sinners; instead of His Father's foes; instead of the children of wrath. Consequently, He suffered without alleviation, without other consolation than the hope of saving our souls. The saints, on the contrary, suffered in the name of Jesus, and, generous and kind as He is, He takes good care not to

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* Gen. xii. 1. † Phil. iii. ‡ St. John, xiv.
§ Psalm, xxxiii. 9. ‖ Canticles, iv. 11.

leave them without consolation. For the few drops of bitterness which these holy souls drink with avidity, He gives them so much sweetness, that they long to drink always of a cup whose after-taste is so delicious. This tenderness and delicacy toward them goes so far, that He mingles their wormwood with milk in such a way that they no longer taste its bitterness. In short, the favors with which He crowns them are sometimes so excessive that their mortal flesh can no longer support them. They succumb beneath the weight of so much glory as Jesus Himself succumbed under the load of sorrow and of shame, and so they sigh after suffering as after a refreshment. And then there occurs between the Creator and the creature a conflict of generosity which delights the angels. Then we behold these holy souls dispute in some sort with the God-man for the possession of a little of that gall which He grudges so much to give them. It is then that, finding their cup as sweet as Jesus found His too bitter, they say in turn, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" But the more they thirst for sorrow, the more their divine Lover plunges them into the torrent of His delights. And they also, beholding their prayer for the first time rejected, and unable to bring themselves to receive so many caresses from a hand pierced for love of them, appeal to the Divine Justice, and display before His eyes their sins, or what they call such, and provoke a chastisement that love refused to inflict. But as they cannot succeed even by this desperate method in obtaining what they wish,—as God only chastises them with glory,—they behold themselves reduced to indemnify themselves by the practice of mortifications, at which our pusilianimity shudders. Angels have beheld illustrious penitents roll themselves

in the desert thorns to stifle the rebellions of sensuality in their flesh; but more than once they have also beheld —O sublime spectacle!—innocent doves recur to the same cruelties in order to deaden in their souls the sensations of celestial joy.

So when Jesus said to James and John, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup," He did not mean to say, You shall suffer the same martyrdom as I Myself, but rather, A martyrdom which will have externally some distant relation to Mine. For no man whatever could support even for an instant that which the Man of sorrows endured. St. Bonaventure says that Jesus suffered as much as if He had been Himself the author of our sins. And St. Thomas adds that He paid no regard to the intrinsic merit of His sorrows, but that He willed to suffer sufficiently to satisfy rigorously, as though He were but an ordinary man. In a word, Jesus drank *the cup of the divine wrath.* As we said just now, He drank it without any mixture, in order to communicate to us purifying virtue in another chalice, the chalice of His love, the chalice of the New Law, the chalice of His blood. So the bee sucks the bitter juices of the thyme, to render it back to us transformed into honey. So a nurse, fearing the too violent effects of some medicinal potion prescribed for her tender charge, takes it herself in order to communicate the salutary properties to her darling.

Thus Jesus had the weariness, the disgust, the anguish, the terrors of death. And we have, if we will, the sweetness, the delight, the sacred inebriation of the cross. St. Teresa says, "Or suffer, or die!" Another saint, improving on her, says, "Not die, but suffer." That is, not Paradise, but the cross, because Jesus said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," "The sorrows

of death have surrounded Me." * His servants at their last hour are able to say, "I could never have believed it was so sweet to die." St. Francis of Assisi gives the pet name of *sister* to death, and finishes his famous hymn to the sun with this stanza: "Blessed be Thou, O Lord, for our sister, bodily death. O Death, thou art man's best friend; who then could say that thou art bitter?"

After seeing all His hours pass in mysterious sufferings, Jesus, dying, raised a cry † which was the expression of pain that had reached its highest point; and St. Teresa, after having trembled with joy each time that the sonorous brass announced to her the end of another hour of exile, died at last in ectasy!

This, friend of the Sacred Heart, is what St. Andrew called *the mystery of the cross.* This is how Jesus shares with His friends. You see what He keeps for Himself and what He leaves to them,—and this is how He has loved us!

Affections and Prayers. ‡

O my Jesus, after so much love on Thy part, can I still refuse to give Thee my wretched heart? No, my dear Redeemer! I offer it to Thee, and give it to Thee entirely. I consecrate to Thee my unreserved will, deign to accept it, and dispose of it according to Thy good pleasure. I possess nothing and can do nothing, but I have a heart which I hold from Thee, and of which none can despoil me. I may lose my goods, my blood, my life, but none can take from me my heart. With this heart I can love Thee; with this heart I want to love Thee. Of Thy favor, O my God, teach me perfect self-forgetfulness! Teach me what I ought to do

* Psalm, xvii. 5. † St. Matt. xxvii. 46.

‡ Taken from the Works of St. Alphonsus.

to attain to Thy pure love, with the desire for which Thy goodness inspires me. I feel really determined to please Thee, but to carry out this resolution I need the succor I now implore. It is for Thee, O loving Heart of Jesus, it is for Thee to cause my poor heart to become entirely Thine. It has been so ungrateful in the past and deprived of Thy love by its own fault. O grant that my whole heart may burn with love to Thee, as Thine has burned with love to me. Grant that my will may become entirely united to Thine, so that I may only desire what Thou wilt, that for the future, Thy holy will may be the rule of all my actions, of all my thoughts, and of all my desires. O Lord, I trust that Thou wilt not refuse me grace to keep the resolution which I make this day at Thy feet, to receive peacefully all the dispositions of Thy providence during my life and at my death.

O Mary immaculate! How happy thou art, whose heart has always been perfectly conformed to the Heart of Jesus. I conjure thee, my gentle Mother, obtain for me grace henceforth to wish and desire only what is willed by Jesus and thee!

CHAPTER XXIX.

Gethsemani—(*Continued*).

JESUS WAS NOWHERE SO ABASED AS IN GETHSEMANI.—THE CONSOLATION THIS MYSTERY HAS FOR US.

"We have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things such as we are, without sin."—Heb. iv. 15.

THE reader must not be surprised if we devote several more pages to the prayer of Jesus in the garden. Our object is to make known the Heart of Jesus as it is depicted in every page of the Sacred Scriptures. We have had occasion to remark before that nowhere does the Saviour display His kind Heart so unreservedly as in the Garden of Gethsemani. It was not without mystery that He who calls Himself the "Bread of God," * willed to be born in Bethlehem, that is, the House of Bread; that He whom the prophecies call the Flower of Jesse, willed to grow up and live in the town of Nazareth, which name, according to St. Jerome, signifies a Flower. And perhaps it is not without cause that this same Saviour chose for the scene of His agony the Mount of Olives. For it was here that His Heart, like a full-ripe olive, yields, under the pressure of sorrow, an oil fit to heal all our wounds, to dissipate the thickest darkness, and to nourish in us the sacred fire of which He Himself was the source and the victim. Nowhere is Jesus

* St. John, vi.

more lovable, more touching, more attractive for the unhappy children of Eve. Why so? Because here He appears more humble, more like unto us than ever. Neither His Father, nor the angels, nor His friends testify at this moment to His holiness or divinity. He seems Himself to lose sight of His eternal generation. He seems to forget that He is *one of the august Trinity*, and that even considered as a man He is the representative of the Most High to mankind.

At Bethlehem, Jesus required the milk of a mortal to sustain His frail existence. He suffered all the inconveniences of poverty. He shivered under a handful of straw; but at Bethlehem, He received the adorations of Mary and Joseph, of the shepherds, and of the kings of the East. He made Herod tremble upon his throne. His birth was celebrated by choirs of angels, and announced by a star to the most distant nations. At Nazareth He is poor, and works, obedient to His blessed Mother and to His foster-father; but there I see these two celestial seraphim prostrated ceaselessly in spirit before Him, and rising often at night to adore Him upon the rude pallet where He reposes. In the desert He suffers the inclemency of the atmosphere; He endures hunger and the insults of the demon; but this miraculous fast of forty days, and the heavenly feast with which it terminates, served as it was by angels appearing under a visible form, all this still reminds me that He is God. At Bethany, Jesus is lost among a crowd of sinners; but John is there to point Him out, and proclaim Him to the crowd as the Lamb of God, alone capable of purifying souls. Then I see the Holy Spirit descending from the opened heavens and resting upon Him; and I hear the Eternal Father saying: "This is My beloved Son!"

In His public life, Jesus delighted to abase Himself, to serve,* to live an ordinary existence,† to avoid display.‡ Yet still He affirmed His divinity and His mission both by words and works. The calm and the authority with which He reveals the sublimest truths, and performs the greatest prodigies, plainly show that His proper element is the divine. He delights to be called *the Son of man.* But this Son of man commands diseases and foul spirits; feeds with five loaves as many thousand people, restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the use of their limbs to the lame. Fatigue exhausts Him like a simple mortal, but He sleeps upon the deck of a boat half filled with waves, and when His disciples awake Him with loud cries, He reproaches them with their little faith, and with a single word controls the mutinous elements.§ Beside the tomb He was softened as we are, but after having wept like a man, He speaks like God, and obedient death releases its victim.‖

In His passion also, although the aureole of divinity around His august head seems obscured, it still remains visible to the attentive eye. At the moment of His arrest, the minions of the law are thrown to the ground, and He heals the ear of the servant whom Peter had wounded.¶ Before Caiphas He is treated as the vilest of scoundrels. But when asked by the high-priest if He was the Son of God, He replies, "I am." And this declaration, sustained as it was by such a life, and by so many virtues, was a testimony which would have satisfied less impious judges. Dragged before Pilate, He astonishes him by the majesty of His bearing

* St. Luke, xxii.
† St. Matt. xi.
‡ St. Matt. xii.
§ St. Mark, iv. 40.
‖ St. John, xii.
¶ St. John, xviii.

and by His speech. And if He maintained silence before Herod, His silence was that of holiness shocked at the spectacle of crowned cruelty and triumphant infamy. The barbarity of His foes causes us to think of His miracles, and the admirable teachings which had excited their jealousy to such a pitch as to extinguish every feeling of humanity. In short, upon reaching Calvary, Jesus prophesies the impending ruin of Jerusalem as the punishment of its parricide. Fastened to the gibbet, He promises heaven to one of His fellow-sufferers; He fulfils with exactitude the last prophecy,—He dies,—and His parting breath awakens the dead in their hoary tombs.

But at Gethsemani the aureole seems quenched, and it is here that the words of the prophet are specially verified: "There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity, His look was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not."*

Who, in reality, would recognize a God in this man who trembles and recoils before the task which He has undertaken? And what can we perceive of the divine in Him if we recall not His saying, "So hath God loved the world"?

It is in the garden for the first and only time that we behold the Heart of Jesus struggling painfully, and under the same conditions as our own, with all the weaknesses, the dislikes, and the terrors of mortal flesh; with that most exquisite sensitiveness for suffering, which is indeed the painful basis of our nature in this life, and that delicacy of feeling which all those who have

* Isaias, liii. 2, 3.

tried to live virtuously understand so well. This it is that renders this mystery so instructive and consoling for us. All men find themselves here in Jesus Christ, with this sole difference, that the human weakness which in ordinary men leads to sin only led the God-man to repulse the atrocious sorrows, sorrows necessary, however, to our happiness. When Jesus sighed after His passion; when He said, "I have a baptism (of blood) wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" undoubtedly my heart is deeply moved and palpitates with love. But this superhuman courage astounds me; a generosity so evidently divine makes me, more than anything else, measure the profundity of my own nothingness; and while I love the Sacred Heart from which issued this loving sigh, I am compelled to prostrate myself before Him.

When, on the contrary, I hear my sweet Saviour say to His Father, and repeat without ceasing during three hours, "My Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me," then, without loving Him less, I feel seized with compassion for Him, and instead of throwing myself at His feet to adore Him, I feel ready to take Him in my arms to comfort Him. Oh, how I love Him in His sorrow! He then truly proves to me that He has taken my nature, such as it is, the whole of it, with all its weaknesses, always sin excepted, and that He did not blush at my wretchedness before His Father and before the angels. Then I no longer find the burden of the flesh heavy, and I no longer complain that I have inherited infirmities from which even a God was not exempted; and far from regretting that I am not an angel, it seems that I might excite envy in the angels.

Let us repeat it once again that never was Jesus so forsaken, or His humanity so much revealed, as in

Gethsemani. And never was He in a position so calculated to inspire us with confidence, and to cure in us, not filial fear, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and which blends itself with love, but that purely servile fear, or rather that horror of God, which is a superstition, and one of the deepest wounds of the hearts of our day.

It is rare for princes to divest themselves entirely of all the ceremonial of their greatness in the presence of their subjects. Generally they preserve, even in their intimate intercourse, a kind of imposing reserve. They dare not be either gay or sad in the same way as other men. They believe that it redounds to their glory to envelop with mystery and splendor the poor humanity which in them resembles that of the simplest mortal. So when a king shows himself most familiar with his favorite, the latter takes good care not to pass the bounds which separate him from the sovereign power. He deems that there is always some folded plait at the bottom of the royal heart which may expand. He fears to look at the man too closely, to surprise the secret of his weakness, and thus to wound past remedy his touchy pride. But if a monarch, wounded in his dearest affections, casts aside for a day his borrowed state, which weighs so heavily upon a dejected heart; if he descends from the throne to go and confide his grief to a friend; if, in a word, he forgets for a while that he is king, to weep as a man, the subject in his turn may forget that this man who weeps is his king. He will see in him only an unhappy friend, he will hesitate no longer to open his arms to him, and mingle his tears with his. For a man who thus weeps before me has for me neither secret nor after-thought. Whatever he may be elsewhere, he places himself on my level, or

rather he makes himself lower, since he asks my consolation.

Well, here is the King of kings, He who alone loses nothing by a close view, in mourning and sorrow. O pious soul, He deigns to come and tell you His grief, and ask you to comfort Him. He will not lay aside His greatness, for that is essentially His, and not borrowed like that of the kings of earth; but, lest respect should make you distant, He hides His divine glory and the splendor proper to His sublime humanity beneath the veil of His feebleness. The luminous serenity of His brow has given place to sorrow and sadness; His noble confidence to mortal terror; His miraculous power to extreme depression;—in a word, His sorrow is so profound, that it seems to absorb Him entirely.

Jesus has Himself told us that He came from heaven to kindle in the hearts of men the fire of divine love.* And as servile fear is one of the great obstacles in the way of perfect love,† He had to find a means to dispel it from our hearts. And what means could be so efficacious as to show Himself to us trembling, desolate, and bathed in tears? Oh, let us allow ourselves to be taken in this divine snare, the last resource of a love not understood by men! And that this may be so, let us still meditate, and meditate ceaselessly, upon the humiliations and sorrows of the Heart of Jesus.

Prayer.‡

O Lord Jesus! Grant that I may love Thee always, as much as I wish, and as much as I ought, so that Thou mayest become the sole object of my pursuit and

* St. Luke, xii. 49. † 1 St. John, iv. 18.

‡ From St. Augustine.

of my thoughts; that I may contemplate Thee without ceasing all the day; that I may feel Thy presence in my sleep; that even in the night my spirit may converse with Thee, and that while my body reposeth, my spirit may continue to hold familiar intercourse with Thee.

O Jesus! most sweet, most good, most loving, most dear, most desirable, most amiable, most beautiful, pour forth, I entreat Thee, pour forth into my heart the flood of Thy charity to the end that nothing earthly, nothing carnal may ever awaken my desires, nor occupy my thoughts, and that Thou alone mayest be in my heart and on my lips. Write, write with Thy finger upon my soul, Thy Name, sweeter than honey; engrave it so deeply upon my heart, that forgetfulness may never more efface it.

Sweet Christ! Good Jesus! Grant me what I ask, what I wish with all the ardor of which I am capable. Give me Thy holy, Thy chaste love; let it fill me, and possess me wholly. And grant me a sure sign of this love: an inexhaustible fount of tears, in order that these tears, a fresh pledge of Thy love for me, may testify in their mute language how dear my heart holds Thee.

Oh, yes, grant me this favor for Thine own sake! I implore Thee by the precious tears which Thou hast shed for my salvation, grant that from henceforth I may never think of Thee, speak of Thee, recall Thee to my recollection, sing Thy praises, offer to Thee my prayers, or the Divine Sacrifice, without being inundated with tears like a pleasant rain, that they may be my nourishment day and night.

Grant me this favor, O blessed God! O loving God! through the prayers and merits of the glorious Virgin Mary, my Queen, and through those of all the saints.

CHAPTER XXX.

Gethsemani—(*Continued*).

IN THE MIDST OF HIS SORROWS JESUS STILL WATCHES OVER HIS OWN.—AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow."—St. Luke, xxii. 45.

"And He saith to Peter: Simon sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And going away again, He prayed, saying the same words. And when He returned, He found them again asleep (for their eyes were heavy), and they knew not what to answer Him."—St. Mark, xiv. 37 to 40.

For a whole hour Jesus has been praying in the garden with strong cries and tears without receiving any answer from Heaven. The echo of the damp and lonely cave has alone responded to His groanings. Not one of those He cherishes has approached to say that simple word, which is always consoling when issuing from a loving heart: "Fear not, be comforted!" His favored disciples have themselves tried to pray, as He had recommended them to do, but soon sadness weighed down their eyelids. "They slept for sorrow," says the Evangelist,* and by the wan light of the moon they might be seen seated upon the ground, their heads leaning on their knees, only a stone's throw from the grotto.

* St. Luke, xxii.

Thus this sweet and touching law of Providence, which causes sleep to follow care, and causes the remedy to proceed from the excess of the evil,—this law was only available for the disciples. The Master, who has so much need of a little sleep to fit Him for the terrible day's work of the morrow,—the Master passes the night in prayers and tears! Jonas, in his flight, slept profoundly in the midst of a ship half swallowed up by the waves. Peter, on the eve of being conducted to execution, slept in the midst of his guards. Is, then, Jesus less intrepid than Jonas, less resigned than Peter? "Ah," He seems to reply, "see you not these hideous reptiles, the sins of the whole world? See you not how they gnaw My Heart? Those who devour Me sleep not;—* and I, how can I sleep? These iniquities, more in number than the hairs of My head, are attributed to Me, as if I had done them; they are like a heavy yoke which drags down My neck, whose reins are held by the hands of one who watches ceaselessly;—† and I, what repose can I obtain?"

But I see Him rise. How pale and weak He is! With what difficulty He sustains Himself! What deadly sadness is depicted upon every feature! He totters toward His beloved ones. What does He want with them? Does He draw near to them to gain some courage in their company, to divert His mind, by a conversation with these dear ones, from the sinister shapes that haunted Him? Listen. "Peter, sleepest *thou?*" At these words the disciples awake, and the sorrowful tones of the Master's voice cause them to tremble. He adds: "So you could not watch one hour with Me? Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation."

These are reproaches, but with what gentleness, with

* Job, xxx. 17. † Lam. iii.

what kindness they are made! His woes have not soured His Heart. He seems only to have become more indulgent by the experience He has had of human weakness. He did not come to seek alleviation of His sorrows in their company, since He advises them to give themselves to prayer. But O Goodness! He recollected that this little flock had been confided to Him by His Father,* and that the Father's will was that none of these poor sheep should perish. One of the twelve has fallen, despite all His tender solicitude, into the toils of the enemy, and has become a rabid wolf against the Good Shepherd. Avarice had caused the perversion of Judas. Jesus fears lest the few disciples that remain loyal may be scandalized at the sight of the humiliations that He is about to bear for love of them. Already their faith had stood a double trial without shrinking. They had believed in the divinity of the Son of man, and in the promised Eucharist, when so many others had fallen away, and when Judas drew forth from the meek lips of his Master the epithet *demon*.† But will not this faith give way when they behold Him whom they believe to be their God hanging upon an infamous gibbet? This is what Jesus dreaded for His beloved ones. This is why He came to arouse them from slumber so dangerous in the face of the enemy.

"Watch and pray, . . . for the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." These words plead for our tears rather than our explanation. Evidently Jesus here makes allusion to the weakness of His own flesh. He speaks from experience, and shows us His kind Heart. He opens it to its very bottom, to allow us to witness the conflict between love for men and the fear of torments. It is like a friend, who, to place the virtue of

* St. John, vi. † St. John, vi. 71.

his friend on guard against snares which he has himself escaped with difficulty, makes in broken words the avowal of his own weakness in a burst of confidence. I seem to hear Jesus saying here: "My beloved, do not abandon yourselves to entire security: be careful not to trust too much to your good resolutions: for however well disposed the heart may be, the flesh is very feeble to respond to its generous ardor. I have just proven it Myself. You know how much I have longed for the day when I was to be baptized with a baptism of blood; —this very evening I told you so.* Well, now that this day is on the point of dawning, assuredly the brightest day of my pilgrimage, my flesh shivers like the leaves of the aspen shaken by the wind, and I need all my courage, all my love for My Father and for you, in order not to renounce My enterprise, which nevertheless is so dear to Me. Will you be stronger than I? As for Myself, I seek My strength in prayer. Do as I; watch and pray that you may not yield when the hour of temptation comes to you."

Say, dear reader, could the heart of your divine Friend be more expansive? Is not this to place Himself upon the same level as yourself, becoming weak among the weak? Doubtless St. Paul thought of this when he wrote to the Hebrews: "We have not a high-priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things such as we are."†

After giving us such good advice in the person of His disciples, Jesus leaves them, in order to conceal from them a fresh attack of sorrow which He felt approaching. He returns painfully to His grotto, and resumes His suppliant attitude, and repeats without intermission His prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice

* St. Luke, xii. † Heb. iv. 15.

pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" He thus teaches us to avoid long speeches and all labored efforts of the mind in prayer,* and to tell in all simplicity to our Father what is in our innermost soul;† to pour out our hearts before Him like water, and especially to resign ourselves beforehand to all that He may please to ordain, well persuaded that He knows what is to our real interest better than we do ourselves. He teaches us also to return frequently to the charge, to repeat a hundred times, a thousand times, the same prayer, to importune our heavenly Father with our cries, when, to put our faith to the test, He seems not to hear us. The Son of God prays in the same terms during several hours, although His Father seems to have forgotten Him. What a lesson for ourselves, who are ready to become impatient, and even to give up prayer, when the Lord does not hear us immediately!

But if His Father forgets Him, Jesus does not forget us. His loving Heart is always where His treasure lies;‡ that is, with the little flock to which He has promised the empire of the world:§ in the midst of His beloved Church. Can a husband, even upon his couch of pain, forget his beloved? Very soon the Bride of the Divine Heart will have no other visible stay but eleven poor, ignorant, and frail men, who tremble below there, a few paces from Him. Jesus fears lest the tempter may cause them at last to fall into his snares. He knows that once the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered.‖ But He wishes to give them His care until the very last moment, that the reproachful question of the prophet may never be addressed to Him: "O shepherd, what has become of thy beautiful flock?"

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* St. Matt. vi. 7. † Psalm, lxi.
‡ St. Matt. vi. 21. § St. Luke, xii. ‖ St. Matt. xxvi. 31.

And then, He hopes that these poor sheep will retain in their flight the remembrance of so much affection and tenderness. He hopes that this remembrance, triumphing over fear, will at least bring one of His own to the foot of the cross to receive His last farewell in the name of the rest, to receive His last sigh as a supreme legacy and return to tell the rest that Jesus "loved them unto the end."* He therefore strives to regain some control over His amazed senses. He rises painfully by the help of both hands, and returns toward them. They still sleep. Will He reproach them severely this time? No. Their eyes are so weighed down, and heavy. So many emotions, first of joy, then of sadness, have to-day passed over their souls. Jesus finds them excusable. It is well that He who is charged with the care of all our souls should watch for all, and strive for all with the Eternal Justice. So watched Jacob at the approach of Esau, his dreaded brother, and so he wrestled with the angel till the dawn of day, while his family slept in their tents. No, doubtless "He who keepeth Israel can neither slumber nor sleep."† The lookout in the vessel's maintop dare not close his eyes upon a sea full of reefs. The shepherd cannot sleep when he hears only two paces from the sheepfold the lion's roar. And the husband ought to watch over the wife, when he hears armed robbers prowling around the house. But can the lookout find fault with the passengers if they repose after the fatigues of the voyage? Will the shepherd awaken his tender lambs that they may hear the howlings of wild beasts? Because he watches, will the husband arouse the wife from her sweet sleep? Does he require the friends who have come to honor his nuptial feast to pass the night with him on foot? Ah,

* St. John, xiii. 1. † Psalm, cxx. 4.

the day is about to dawn when the Bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will watch and pray and strive for the Bride and her children.

Besides, Jesus here only anticipated that life which is one entire sacrifice of life, in which from the depths of the tabernacle, He watches over us day and night while we sleep; while we enjoy ourselves; while we live in false security in the midst of our foes, and even when we give ourselves up to iniquity.

Meanwhile, at the sound of the Master's trembling footsteps the three disciples awake, quite confused at their weakness. Not to increase their shame, Jesus leaves them alone. He deprives Himself even of the comfort of addressing to them some friendly words, for fear lest His sadness should appear in His voice, and serve to increase theirs. So during her long sleeplessness, a kind mother leaves her couch more than once to see that her infant reposes, and content with the happiness of this object of her tenderness, denies herself the pleasure of embracing it lest she should disturb its slumbers. Beside, the time for these sweet communications was past for Jesus: it was now the hour for sowing in tears, and He must take advantage of it. And His generous Heart would have deemed itself committing a larceny to our prejudice, if He had stolen from pains and torments any one of those precious moments which belonged to us all.

*Affections and Prayers.**

O Heart of the most generous, the most faithful of friends; who art never so near to those who love Thee as when they are in tribulation, why didst Thou abandon Thyself to a boundless sorrow? Why wouldst

* Taken from the works of Father Thomas of Jesus.

Thou suffer these weaknesses, these miseries so unworthy of Thee? Ah, doubtless it was that we might fix our eyes continually upon Thee, as our pattern: that we might expect from Thee, as our strength, victory over our enemies: and might have an entire confidence in Thee as our sole remedy.

What am I, O Jesus, to deserve the good with which Thou loadest me? O grant that at least I may glorify Thee by profiting by Thy humiliations, and since, strong as Thou wert, Thou becamest weak for love of me, make me, weak as I am, strong in Thee. But do with me, O divine Lover, that which Thou wilt. I give myself up to Thee without reserve. Take me, possess me, in order that I may no longer belong to myself. Take from me all life's sweetness, all desires after comfort and joy, in order that I may seek them only and find them in Thee, O love and life of my soul!

How foolish I am when I seek my happiness outside of Thee! How ungrateful I am when I commit sin which causes Thee such bitter sadness! Why was I born if I was to cause Thee so much pain! Take pity upon me, O Infinite Mercy! Grant that after having sinned against Thee, I may deserve to suffer for Thee. Give me a spark of that love with which Thou Thyself didst burn, that I may know myself, may hate myself, and may avenge upon myself what I have done against Thee!

CHAPTER XXXI.

Gethsemani—(*Concluded*).

WHO IS JESUS?—APPARITION OF AN ANGEL.—THE TEMPTATION.—THE AGONY.—THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.—THE BLOODY SWEAT.—AFFECTIONS.

"O God, my God, look upon me: why hast Thou forsaken me? O my God, I shall cry by day, and thou wilt not hear. Fat bulls have besieged me. They have opened their mouths against me, as a lion ravening and roaring. My heart is become like wax melting."—Psalm, xxi. 2, 3, 13, 14, 15.

"And leaving them, He went again, and He prayed the third time, saying the self-same word."—St. Matt. xxvi. 44.

"And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."—St. Luke, xxii. 43, 44.

Before proceeding farther, it will be useful to recall who this Man is who is so profoundly humiliated in the Garden of Olives. What remains to be said respecting this touching mystery is of such a nature that it might well cause us to lose sight of the fact that this Man is none other than the Son of God, co-equal with His Father. It is the Word, that is, the utterance which the Eternal Father expresses to Himself, and who is the faithful and adequate resemblance, though substantial,

living, and personal, of the substance of the Father.* This Man, in one word, is, by His divine nature, *one of the august Trinity!*

Astonishing mystery! At that very moment He reigned in heaven with the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, and yet was lying prostrate in Gethsemani! He was the splendor of the Father's glory, and yet among us was without attraction, and resembled the meanest of mankind.† In heaven He was the object of the adoration of the angels, who veiled their faces, trembling before Him: on earth, His face was as it were hidden, He laid His forehead in the dust.‡ In heaven He lay in the bosom of the Father and in the possession of His divine attributes, enjoyed a beatitude infinite as Himself; and here on earth, His sacred humanity, although always inseparably united to His divinity, received no help, no consolation whatever. In heaven He formed the joy and the happiness of the angels, and the delight of the heavenly Father Himself; and upon earth He beheld Himself abandoned by the angels, abandoned by His Father, who regarded Him with irritated look, and delivered Him over to terror, weariness, and sorrow. In short, in heaven He heard and answered the prayer of the lowliest mortal, He heard even the cry of the sparrow asking for food; and here below He Himself prayed with strong crying and tears; and the Father heard Him not.

We are not dividing the person of Jesus Christ, but, according to the example of the Church, § stating what is proper to the divine nature of this dear Redeemer, and what belongs to His human nature, to this human

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* Heb. i. 3. † Isaias, liii. 2, 3.
‡ Lam. iii. § See Roman Breviary, *In festo Circumcis.*

Heart of a God, to this Heart of the same blood as ours, but exalted, from the moment of His conception, to the dignity of the Divine Person, and thus worthy of all our adoration. And I have said all this, O pious soul, in order that you may measure the breadth and the length and the depth and the height of the love that constrained the Father to give up His Son to such humiliations, and the Son to accept them.

Behold, then, our Jesus for the third time prostrated in His grotto. His vexations, His sorrows, His fears are redoubled. His prayer also becomes more pressing and supplicating, but only the voice of our sins replies.* They are there like so many vipers surrounding Him, besieging the heart of their victim, attacking Him furiously, tearing Him with their cruel teeth, and injecting their mortal venom into His innumerable wounds.

Meanwhile, what is passing in heaven? Ah, doubtless the angels have flown from all points of the universe to become spectators of this fearful scene. Doubtless they contemplate with amazement their Lord humbled, praying, weeping, groaning in the garden, and they weep after their manner over His sorrows. I can imagine that the chant of the seraphim ceased to echo through the vaults of heaven that the voice of the God-man might be heard alone in that solemn hour. I can imagine also those pure spirits casting suppliant glances toward the throne of the Eternal, as if to conjure Him to come to the aid of the adorable humanity of His Son. And then, as the heavenly Father seems to have divested Himself of all tenderness toward Jesus, I seem to see one of the most exalted in glory, emboldened by his love for this divine Man, in whom he sees his King,

* Jerem. xiv.

approach the throne and dare to represent to the Ancient of Days that it is not becoming that the prayer of such a petitioner should be totally rejected. The Father approves of these just remonstrances, and charges the sublime intercessor with certain words for Jesus.

Suddenly a luminous form descends from heaven, penetrates into the cave, whose gloom He dispels, and standing near the Saviour, still prostrate, speaks with Him in tenderest sympathy.

The holy gospels have not preserved the speech of the angel on this occasion, but in all probability it was strong and brief, as being dictated word by word by a God whose justice was not yet satisfied. Doubtless the celestial envoy in substance told Jesus that, sent by His Father, he came to exhort Him to recall His engagements toward the Divine Justice, which would not consent to exempt Him from the death of the cross. To diminish somewhat the horror which the idea of this frightful execution occasioned Him, he places before His eyes the glory which was to return to God, and the happiness of men who ought to be so dear to Him, and who, purified by the effusion of His blood, would take their place among the celestial choirs.

In presence of this apparition, you may perhaps reproach me, O faithful soul, with having said just now that in this mystery neither God nor the angels testified to the divinity of Jesus. But do you not see the difference between this apparition, and that, for instance, of the angels who came to bring food to our Saviour in the wilderness? There the angel served Jesus as his Master; * here he encourages Him, consoles

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* St. Matt. iv. 11.

Him, strengthens Him. Now, he who encourages is regarded as superior to him who receives encouragement. He who strengthens is deemed stronger than he to whom he lends support. And the consoler does not lift up the afflicted, save by suggesting to him reasons of which the latter is supposed to be ignorant. Jesus, then, on this occasion receives the alms of a creature. And then, in what capacity does the angel present himself? As the ambassador of the Eternal. He represents the Eternal, he speaks in the name of the Eternal, and therefore with authority, like the angel (if he was an angel) that spake with Moses upon Mount Sinai, and whom Moses called *the Lord.*

But what appeared a consolation was in reality but an additional humiliation for the Saviour. He prays to His Father, and His Father no longer answers Him directly, as heretofore, but sends one of His servants, empowered to make known His severe will. Thus did King David send Joab to his son Absalom. "Tell him," he said, "that he may enter Jerusalem, but forbid him to appear before me." The innocent Jesus, like the guilty Absalom, sees Himself in a manner repulsed by His Father. The servants see the Face of the heavenly Father continually, but the Son cannot either see it or hear His voice. In short, how was the message carried out? Doubtless the angel would have thrown himself at the feet of his King, but, representing at this moment the Most High, he is forbidden to humiliate himself. A royal envoy would be unfaithful to his mission who would lower himself before those to whom he carries his master's orders. The angel would fain dry the tears of this divine Afflicted One, he would fain offer Him, as in the desert, some celestial cordial to fortify His depressed Heart, but he cannot even offer Him

a drop of water. Thus the God succumbs, and the creature strengthens Him. The God trembles, and the creature reassures Him. The God lies prostrate, and the creature stands upright. The angel speaks and commands in the name of the Eternal, and Jesus listens with respect. He submits without hesitating, and humbly begs him to convey to His Father the homage of His obedience. Then the angel retires and disappears without saying another word, without testifying even by a gesture the admiration with which the devotion of his God to the salvation of the children of earth inspired him. Thus was the Son of God humbled; thus did He obey even unto death; thus did He love us.

But there was yet another trial which the Heart of Jesus was to suffer in Gethsemani, and which we have not yet mentioned. After narrating the temptation of our Saviour in the desert, St. Luke adds: "Satan departed from Him for a time."* He was to return, then, and at what period was he so likely to do so, if not at this juncture, upon which depended all the fruit of the Redeemer's life? Jesus trembled at the prospect of the death prepared for Him. An angel had come to repeat the command to die, and yet the murmur of His prayer, growing gradually more feeble, ceased not to resound through the grotto, once more become solitary. Satan imagined then that He would waver in His obedience, and that He would be more easily overcome than at the time of His first temptation. For Satan vaguely knew that Jesus was the Messias, but he did not know that He was the Word in person. And although he had inspired Judas with the horrible design of betraying his Master, in order to put an end to His

* St. Luke, iv. 13.

preaching, he now understood that it would be far better to make Him fall into the idolatry of disobedience* than to make Him die. God would then be offended by the righteous of the righteous, the Holy Spirit would leave Him, and the whole edifice, so painfully founded, would crumble in an instant from its foundation.

It is therefore natural to believe that, by God's permission, the enemy of our salvation came at this moment, with several of his dark legions, to make a supreme assault upon the Heart of the friend of man. By the aid of his enchantments he had previously exhibited to Him all the kingdoms of the earth, and had offered Him their possession in return for an act of idolatry.† He might in Gethsemani cause a series of phantoms to pass before His eyes, representing with horrible distinctness all the details of the torments prepared for Him. And having thus intimidated Him, ask Him ironically: "And for whom is this? Who is the object of this love, pushed even to folly? Is man really any better than we?" He might then, in a series of moving pictures, recall to the Saviour the innumerable benefits of God toward men; the love that presided at the creation of Adam, the sublimity of his destiny, the beauty of the abode where he was at first placed,—and all this wrecked for a fruit! Then the abominations that precipitated the Deluge, then the demons substituted for God upon all the altars upon earth, the unfaithfulness and continual revolt of the chosen people themselves, crowned at length by the crucifixion of that Messias whom they had so much desired. And judging of the future by the past, and relying upon the prophets and upon the knowledge of the human heart which he has

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* 1 Kings, xv. † St. Matt. iv. 9.

acquired during so many centuries, he might have shown Jesus the persecutions, the schisms, the heresies which were to desolate the first ages of the Church; and the coldness, the shameful cowardice, the sensuality, the indifference, the spirit of revolt and impiety which were to triumph in the times in which we live. But that which we cannot at all doubt is, that he strove by every means to render us odious to the divine Redeemer, or, at least, to chill His loving Heart toward us.

In this, pious reader, he could not succeed, for Jesus did love us! But what he did succeed in, was to cause such fear and vexation to the Divine Heart, that, according to the Holy Gospel, "Jesus fell into an agony!" This is the place to meditate upon the most painful moment which the Sacred Heart endured here below; to take part in the supreme struggle of this Heart, love personified, with the most poignant of internal pains ever experienced.

"What is an agony? When an animated being is dissolved, the vanquished life retires before the cold, which, little by little, invades all the members and concentrates itself definitely in the heart. Death then comes to attack it there, and we call it *the agony*, that is, the pre-eminent conflict, the mysterious effort of life defending this last retreat against its terrible enemy, and the assaults dealt by the latter to drive it out. But in Jesus the very contrary happened. Death attacked His Heart directly, for His members had remained up to this moment healthy and intact. What then was the evil that gnawed this sacred organ?

We have already remarked that in man the heart strongly feels the rebound of the soul's affections. A

sweet and moderate joy expands it * and renders its movements free and mellow, life then escaping with the blood like an overflowing river. It penetrates all the flesh, insinuates itself even into the bones, and shows itself uncovered in the features, which become brilliant and ruddy. This is what Isaias describes in these words: "The Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness, and deliver thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." † On the contrary, fear and sadness tend to contract violently the nerves of the heart and chest, and render their functions difficult and irregular. Thus the word *anguish*, so frequently employed in Scripture to denote soul-pain, signifies in its strict meaning, *narrowing*, *shrinking*. We can therefore easily understand that sadness will quickly destroy an organism, and that, according to the Wise Man, it ends by killing a man.

Those of my readers who have sometimes experienced a great pain may resent these details perhaps as useless and inappropriate for them. But if among them there are any who have not yet known suffering, they will appreciate my efforts to make them better acquainted with the mysterious agony of the Heart of Jesus.

This Divine Heart was so straitened at this moment by fear and sadness, that its palpitations, sometimes slow, sometimes quick, were violent as those of the dove under the grip of the hawk's hard and sharp talons; as the vibrations of an harmonious chord at its utmost tension; you would think that it would break the sides, or even itself. Its beatings might have been

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* Psalm, cxviii. † Isaias, lviii. 11.

counted at a distance, if they had not been drowned by a more harrowing sound escaping from the oppressed bosom of the Saviour; by that hoarse and sinister sound, which none can forget whose ears have at any time been afflicted by this frightful prelude to eternal silence: I mean the death-rattle.

Who of us, if he had been present at this terrible scene, would not have trembled for the salvation of the world? Who would have dared to hope that a God would consent to suffer tortures whose very thought nearly caused Him to die of fear?

The agony of Jesus was then occasioned by fear, but love was at its root. Indeed, to put an end to all His ailments He had but to disown us, to abandon us to our unhappy fate, as Satan had counselled Him. He had but to permit our blood to fall upon our guilty heads;* to allow us to reap the harvest which we had sown;† to drink the gall which we had poured into His cup, that wine of wrath which had been pressed out for us!‡ He owed nothing, either to us or to the Divine Justice. It was from pure love that He devoted Himself to sorrows a thousand times more terrible than death. But if love ran in advance of torments, sighing after the cross, fear fled from them with all the energy of human sensitiveness: and the heart, theatre of this struggle between two contrary sentiments, was also their victim.

Do you wish for a proof that this was a real struggle? Listen. Behold the meek Lamb, in the midst of affrighting agony, collects what is left to Him of strength, and, heaving painfully His crushed chest, converts into prayer a last breath just ready to escape

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* Acts, xviii. 6. † Gal. vi. 8. ‡ Psalm, lxxiv.

Him! "And being in an agony," says the Evangelist, "He prayed the longer."* And probably for the hundredth time, the solitary echo, alone sensible to the complaints of a God, repeated that invocation, as monotonous as that of a mendicant, humble as that of a condemned prisoner, entreating as that of a criminal put to the torture: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!" This is the language of fear. Hear now that of love. "Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it,"—that is to say, if mankind can only be reconciled through My blood,—"Thy will be done!"†

Ah, doubtless we know not which to admire more, the fear that could keep such love for an instant in abeyance, or the love that could resist such a fear, if we did not know that love triumphed at last. Yes, love for men was stronger in the Heart of Jesus than the fear of sorrows, more fearful than all the torments of all the martyrs put together. But to secure this, that adorable conquerer Love had to use so much violence to the flesh, that the flesh succumbed. The blood, darting forth with too much violence from the arteries, issued from all the pores of the divine body.

"And His sweat became as great drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground."‡ So says the Gospel; and to restore the full force to the Greek word, it ought to be rendered: "He had a sweat of blood, in form like drops of rain, which flowed down to the ground!"

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* St. Luke, xxii. 43. † St. Matt. xxvi. 42.
‡ St. Luke, xxii. 44.

*Affections and Prayers.**

O most loving Heart of Jesus! Thou art not satisfied to await the floods of sorrow that are about to break upon Thee, abandonment by God and man, and all the injuries, opprobrium, and torments prepared for Thee. Thou tormentest Thyself by anticipation, suffering as much in imagination as in reality. Thou permittest Thy holy humanity, attacked at once by a desire for, and a dread of, suffering, in its violent agitation to shed a sweat of blood. Thou willest to be deprived of all succor, as if Thou hadst no more hope of comfort, neither from heaven nor upon earth, nor from Thy friends, nor even from God Himself!

Is it thus, O Divine Strength, that Thou permittest Thyself to be weakened when enemies have to be fought that Thou alone canst conquer? What has become of that desire to suffer? Formerly Thou didst desire it with great impatience. Yet, be Thine infinite love praised, glorified, and eternally adored, O Jesus!

Thou didst reduce Thyself to this extremity only to become in all things like unto me; to prove to me that Thy love alone could compel Thee to suffer, and to become my consolation and model in all the miseries of this life. O Divine Love, is it possible that Thou possessest so much power over my Jesus, and yet hast so little power over me? I love Thee, O Jesu! And my chief desire is to be consumed by Thy love. Ah, do not alone burn with this divine fire, grant that I may burn with Thee!

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* Taken from the works of Father Thomas of Jesus.

Practice.

The sacred hour. This exercise consists in consecrating one hour every Thursday, from eleven o'clock till noon, to prayer and meditation upon the mystery of Gethsemani. Three hundred days of Indulgence are annexed to each such meditation. And upon Maundy Thursday, and the feast of Corpus Christi, there is a Plenary Indulgence, upon condition of communicating. It will not be less acceptable to the Sacred Heart to perform this exercise at some other hour if it cannot be done at the time indicated.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Golgotha.

THE MEDIATOR.—INGRATITUDE OF MEN.—VARIOUS PASSAGES TAKEN FROM THE PSALMS.—AFFECTIONS.

"In the time of wrath He was made a reconciliation."—Ecclus. xliv. 17.

"He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: . . . and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; every one hath turned aside into his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was His own will."—Isaias, liii. 5, 6, 7.

Rome in the early days of its nationhood received a declaration of war from the Sabines. The two nations were about to engage in battle, when the wives of the Romans, who were, in most cases, daughters of the Sabines, ran and threw themselves between the hostile camps, and so prevented their fathers, brothers, and husbands from slaughtering each other.

Why do I quote from profane history when dealing with so sacred a subject? It may seem a little out of place, but if you come with me to Calvary I will explain my idea. Behold the God-man upon the cross. His brow is bleeding beneath a diadem bristling with thorns. His eyes are nearly closed; His face is pale, wasted, and defiled; His painful breathing, broken by sobs, escapes from His half-opened mouth; His breast, wounded in

every spot, palpitates violently; all His members are torn, and enormous nails transfix His hands and feet! Let us approach with Mary, with John, with Magdalen, and while He is in agony, while His heart's blood falls drop by drop to the ground, and upon our souls, let us meditate in silence.

Ever since the first sin had defiled the world, this direful seed had produced an abundant harvest of iniquities. It seemed as if men were trying how most to irritate their Creator. Instead of trying to draw near to Him by penance, as had Adam, Abel, and Enoch, they fled far from Him, like Cain, in order to sin more uninterruptedly. In vain God had said to them, "Return unto Me, why will ye perish?" They only replied, "We will not return, we will follow the devices of our own hearts."* And they did follow them, and soon the corruption was such that God, says the Holy Spirit, "repented that He had created man," wishing to express thereby His horror at so many abominations.

To avenge His outraged holiness, and to purify the world, God sent the Deluge, which destroyed all the human race except Noe and his family. Hardly was this Patriarch dead when his descendants forgot the mercies of which he had been the object, and remembered the divine chastisement only to brave it by erecting the tower of Babel. God tried again to bring them back by humbling their pride, but from that time forward they beheld in Him only a tyrant whose yoke they finally broke, saying, "We will serve Thee no longer!"† And as man cannot exist without some sort of God, they made gods of wood and stone, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

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* Jerem. iii.

† Jerem. ii.

It was then that the Lord chose Abraham to become the root of a faithful people, and the Father of believers. As to the remainder of mankind, He allowed them to walk in their own ways,* without however ceasing to load them with benefits. As they refused to acknowledge in their conduct the God who was manifested by His works, as St. Paul says, "God delivered them up to a reprobate sense," † to the desires of their own hearts. We may see in the Sacred Books the portrait of man thus abandoned to himself.

Now this is the most terrible vengeance that God can inflict upon sinners here below. When He smites, He is still a Father, for He smites but to heal. St. Peter informs us that many of those who perished in the waters ‡ of the Deluge attained to salvation through repentance. But when He seems to close His eyes to our iniquities, He is our enemy. Then the words of the prophet are verified: "God hateth the wicked, and his wickedness; He shall mock at them and laugh at their ruin."

This was the condition of the human race at the advent of the Saviour. We may then assert that war was declared between the Father and the children! war to the uttermost, war without peace or truce.

Let us now return to the meek and innocent Victim, to Jesus crucified. He is the Son of God, whom we have offended, and who pursues us with His wrath. He is the brother of sinners, the Bridegroom of our souls, which have become the enemies of His Father. If, on the one hand, "Zeal for the house of God hath eaten Him up," and the crimes committed by sinners against the Divine Majesty fell upon Him: §

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* Acts, xiv.
† Rom. i. 28.
‡ 1 St. Peter, iii.
§ Psalm, lxviii. 10.

upon the other, His pity was moved, and His Heart melted like water flowing upon the earth at the sight of the misfortunes of His people. Loving His Father with an infinite love, and His brethren with an incomprehensible love, He is lacerated at the sight of the cruel war which they mutually wage. His sensitive Heart receives every blow which they aim at each other, and He came to throw Himself between the two camps, resolved to reconcile the Father with the children, or to perish under their blows. At one time He stretches toward His brethren His hands pierced with nails,* and seems to say, "Sinners, recollect yourselves! With whom do you make war? Is it not your Father? Are you not His children? Has He not created you? Is it thus, ye insensate, that you testify your gratitude? Ah, return, return at length to Him, and I will guarantee that He will receive you."

But His brethren remain deaf to His pleadings.

Then the divine Crucified raises His blessed hands toward His Father,† and with a voice full of tears, cries: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Cease to be irritated at this weak flock of sheep; let Thy wrath fall upon Me alone.‡ Put to My account what they owe§ to Thy justice. Let Me be anathematized for My brethren's sake.‖

The Divine Justice *took Him at His word*, like an eager creditor when a rich man offers to pay the debts of an insolvent friend. The Lord laid upon Him all our iniquities, all our evils, all our sins, and of this Man, the fairest of the children of men, He made a leper; He smote Him, humiliated and wounded Him because of

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* Isaias, lxv. † Psalm, cxlii.
‡ 2 Kings, xxiv. 17. § Philemon, i. 18. ‖ Rom. ix. 3.

our crimes: and caused to fall upon Him the chastisement that was to procure our peace, and by His wounds we were healed.* "For," says St. Paul, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." "For us," he says again, "He hath made sin, Him that knew no sin: that we might be made the justice of God in Him."† And again: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written: Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."‡ And finally: "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the Holies by the high-priest for sin are burned without the camp,"§ or, outside of the city. Here the Apostle is speaking of the victim offered up every year, which was the principal type of the Sacrifice of Calvary. This victim, laden by the high-priest with the sins of the Jewish people, was esteemed so impure, that it could not be burnt either in the temple or in the city, for both would have been defiled. And he who burnt it in the wilderness had to wash his body and his garments before re-entering the city. This is why, adds the doctor of the Gentiles, "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate." That is, He was treated as an impure and criminal being.

Well, here we have the hostage and the ransom agreed upon. Witnesses of such devotedness, doubtless men will allow themselves to be touched at the sight of the sufferings of the Divine Lamb; they will weep over their sins, and compel themselves to soften, at least by their compassion, the evils which they have done. Alas! they seem only to become more infuriated.

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* Isaias, liii. 5.
† 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.
‡ Gal. iii. 13.
§ Heb. xiii. 11.

Jesus, after His resurrection, said to His disciples, "All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Psalms concerning Me."* Guided by this idea, we have perused these sacred songs, and found them filled with the ineffable sorrows of the God-man. He complains by the mouth of the prophet ceaselessly, now of the hatred of His ungrateful brethren, and the tortures which they inflict upon Him, and now of His Father's wrath. Listen to the lamentations of the Heart of Jesus, and let them soften our own. For love of us, and in order to reconcile us to the Eternal Justice, He became our Brother. He came and dwelt among us, verifying thus the sweet name of Emmanuel (that is, God with us), which had been given Him by the prophet. We denied Him,† we received Him not.‡ We preferred a thief and a murderer, a Barabbas, and by the mouth of the Jews we cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him!" We cast the Son of our Master out of the vineyard and slew Him.§ This is expressed by Himself in this way:

"I am become a stranger unto My brethren, and like an alien unto the sons of My mother. I am counted as among those that go down to the pit; the enemy hath pursued Me, he hath placed Me in the darkness like to those that have been a long time dead."

Jesus took our evils upon Him, He healed the leprous and the paralytic, made the lame to walk, the blind to see, and raised the dead, and yet we tormented Him in every part of His sacred body.

"They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. They have dug my hands

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* St. Luke, xxiv. 44.
† Acts, iii. 14.
‡ St. John, i. 11.
§ St. Luke, xx.

and my feet, they have numbered all my bones. Sinners have smitten my back as the artisan smites the anvil." He lived only for our good. He wept over our miseries, and spread benefits wherever He went. He carried us in His Heart, saying to us without ceasing, "Come unto Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." He wished to gather us around Him as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and we only returned Him evil for good.

"Instead of loving me, they speak evil of me, but I give myself up to prayer for them. They rendered me evil for good, and hatred for my good-will. There was none that had pity upon me, they persecuted a poor man, a beggar. They tried to slay him whose heart was already broken. They pursued him whom Thou hast smitten, O Lord, and added to the pain of my wounds."

He is our Advocate, and pleads the cause of sinners at the Divine Tribunal. He excuses them as far as it is possible, and asks pardon for them. And sinners accused Him, and brought false witness against Him, demanding His death when the judge would have sent Him away acquitted.

"False witnesses have risen up against me; they laid to my charge things that I knew not. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent: the venom of asps is under their lips."

He is the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep. He came to gather them together and to lead them into plentiful pastures, and He found in them only rabid wolves.

"They who hate me without cause are multiplied above the hairs of my head. They came about me like wasps. They came near to devour my flesh."

He sought to appease them by the charms of that mild eloquence which flowed from His Heart, inflamed with love, as honey flows from the comb exposed to the warmth of the sun. He recurred to the amiable artifice of parables, to induce them to relish the severe lessons which they needed, but they remained obstinate in their fury.

"Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent, like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears, which will not hear the voice of the charmers, nor of the wizard that charmeth wisely."

We recollect that when Jesus delivered the delightful parable of the Good Shepherd, a great number among them said, "He hath a devil! Why hear you Him?"*

He is the best of friends, sharing with His own all that He possesses. He causes them to be adopted by His Father, washes their feet, feeds them with His flesh, gives them a royal crown upon the same conditions that He had received it Himself, and His friends abandoned Him in His sorrows.

"I am become an object of fear unto mine own; they that saw me fled from me; my remembrance, like that of a dead man, is effaced from their hearts. I am become like a broken vessel. My kinsmen stood far off from me."

In short, one of His dearest friends betrayed Him and sold Him.

"If it had been an enemy that had done me this evil, I could have borne it. But thou, my friend; thou who didst share the delights of my table, thou who didst walk on an equality with me to the house of the Lord!"

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* St. John, x. 20.

*Affections and Prayers.**

My dearest Saviour! behold at Thy feet one of Thy most ungrateful persecutors. Ah, pray also for me to Thy Father that He may forgive me. The Jews and the executioners, in crucifying Thee, knew not what they did, while I know well that in sinning I offend a God who was crucified and slain for me. But Thy blood and Thy death have won for me the divine mercy, and I cannot doubt my pardon on beholding Thee die to procure it. O my sweet Redeemer! I implore Thee look upon me with those same loving eyes with which Thou didst look upon me while dying for me on the cross. Look upon me, and pardon all the ingratitude with which I have repaid Thy love. I repent of my contempt toward Thee, O my Jesus, and I desire to die crucified for Thee, who didst die crucified for me!

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* From the works of St. Alphonsus.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Golgotha—(*Continued*).

JESUS THE OBJECT OF HIS FATHER'S ANGER. — PASSAGES FROM THE PSALMS. — PSALM XXI. — AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?*—that is: My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—St. Matt. xxvii. 46.

In the preceding chapter the Psalmist made us listen to the complaints of the God-man against His brethren. We shall ask him in this to re-echo in our ears some of the lamentations of the meek victim of His Father's anger. It is here His voice becomes touching, and the picture of His martyrdom affecting and terrible. Undoubtedly it would have been a terrible thing for men to have put to death their Saviour and the author of their being; but for His Father to have after a manner connived with sinners to make Him suffer, that He, so to speak, became cruel* toward His beloved Son, and this, that He might become mild and merciful toward His enemies,—this is calculated to astonish the heavens themselves.

It was because Divine Justice rigorously demands satisfaction for all outrages committed against it. It would have Adam perish, together with his entire race,

* Job, xxx.

or some person of infinite merit should be answerable for him. The Son of God took Adam's place, and from that time was regarded as the only and the greatest of sinners, and treated as such, in order that as the transgression of one man had passed upon all men to their condemnation, so also the merits and sufferings of another man might be applied to all to their justification.* Doubtless, a single drop of the divine blood would have been amply sufficient to ransom worlds, but it would not have sufficed to convey to us a just idea of sin, nor make known to us the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus.

Therefore the Eternal Father did not exempt His Son from any punishment due to sin. The sinner despises the sovereign commands of God, he deserves that his prayers should be despised. "Where," said the Lord to the idolatrous Jews, "where are the gods in whom ye trusted? Let them arise and help you."† The sinner is self-complaisant: he deserves to be humbled. "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled."‡ The sinner defies God: he must be cowed by fear. "They say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath is come."§ The sinner seeks his own satisfaction in enjoyments opposed to the law of God. He must be punished by pain. Proportion his torments to his past delights.‖ Now let David, or rather Jesus, speak. Let us listen to the groanings of the Lamb, bowed beneath the weight of the world's

* Rom. v.
† Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.
‡ St. Luke, xviii. 14.
§ Apoc. vi. 16, 17.
‖ Apoc. xviii. 7.

sins. And observe, He calls them *His* sins; so truly did His Father attribute them to Him, and punish Him as though He had been the really guilty one.

"Torrents of iniquity have troubled me: there is no rest for my bones by reason of my sins. Because my iniquities have gone over my head, they overwhelm me as a heavy burden. Innumerable evils have surrounded me: my iniquities have seized upon me, and have hidden from me the sight of heaven: they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me. The waters have come in even unto my soul: I stick fast in the deep mire of the bottomless abyss. I am come into deep waters, and the tempest covers me!"

And that we may know who this great culprit is, he adds, "I have paid for the things which I never took," that is, for sins that are foreign to me.

We have said that in punishment of his revolt the sinner deserves to see his prayers rejected, and that for his pride he must be humbled.

"Lord, why rejectest Thou my prayer, why hidest Thou Thy face from me? I am poor and in labors since my youth; ever since I was raised up" (that is to say, crucified, as we see in St. John),* "I am humbled, and my soul is full of trouble. My eyes fail me from looking after Thee, O Lord: I suffer violence, defend me! What shall I say? what will He answer me, since He Himself is the author of all my evils. I am exhausted through my crying, my voice is become hoarse, my eyes fail me, while I hope in God."

We have said that the sinner ought to be punished by fear and by sorrow for having defied God, and for having plunged into forbidden pleasures.

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* St. John, iii.

"Thy indignation weigheth upon me, and Thou hast drowned me in the floods of Thine anger. Thy wrath has passed over me, and Thy terrors have filled me with trouble; they have encompassed me all the day like waters, they have surrounded me altogether. I mingle my drink with weeping because of Thy wrath and indignation, for Thou hast lifted me up to cast me down. Lord, rebuke me not in Thy fury; have pity upon me because I am weak; heal me, for all my bones are troubled, and my soul is exceedingly troubled; but Thou, Lord, how long?

"The sorrows of death have encompassed me, the toils of death have seized upon me. Because Thy arrows stick fast in my heart, and Thou hast laid Thine avenging hand upon me. There is no health in my flesh because of Thy displeasure. All Thy billows and storms have gone over me."

Ah, woe, woe to us, if once delivered by the anguish of the God-man we fall again into the hands of Divine Justice! He Himself has said, "If they do these things in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?"*

It may be objected, perhaps, that the passages we have cited are not all of them applicable to the Divine Crucified, but that many of them relate to the author of the Psalm.

We may reply that David and the other prophets were the predecessors and types of Christ, and that their lives are full of mysterious events which have no other reason for occurring. But it will be best to place before the pious reader a portion of the twenty-first Psalm, which can in no sense apply to any one but Jesus Himself. He recited the first verse aloud when upon the point of expiring. Now this Psalm includes all the

* St. Luke, xxiii. 31.

ideas and similitudes which we have drawn from the others.

"O God, my God, look upon me: why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of *my sins.*

"O my God, I shall cry by day, *and Thou wilt not hear:* and by night, and it shall not be reputed as folly in me.

"But Thou dwellest in the holy place, the praise of Israel.

"In Thee have our fathers hoped: they have hoped, and Thou hast delivered them.

"They cried to Thee, and they were saved: they trusted in Thee, and were not confounded.

"But I am a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.

"All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head," *saying,*

"He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver him: let Him save him, seeing He delighteth in him.

"For Thou art He that hast drawn me out of the womb: my hope from the breasts of my mother.

"I was cast upon Thee from the womb: from my mother's womb Thou art my God. Depart not from me.

"For tribulation is very near: for there is none to help me.

"Many calves have surrounded me, fat bulls have besieged me.

"They have opened their mouths against me, as a lion ravening and roaring.

"I am poured out like water: and all my bones are scattered.

"My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my

tongue hath cleaved to my jaws: and Thou hast brought me down into the dust of death.

"For many dogs have encompassed me: the council of the malignant hath besieged me.

"They have dug my hands and feet: they have numbered all my bones.

"And they have looked and stared upon me.

"They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots.

"But Thou, O Lord, remove not Thy help to a distance from me: look towards my defence.

"Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword: my only one from the hand of the dog.

"Save me from the lion's mouth: and my lowness from the horns of the unicorns.

"I will declare Thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the Church will I praise Thee."

Affections and Prayers.

O Jesus, Thou wast the Son of God, the heir of all His glory, the inheritor of the universe.* Thou wast His delight, and "the Son of His love." †

And I was the son of Adam, the prevaricator, the inheritor of his shameful nakedness, heir of the abyss of perdition and perpetual horror.‡ I was an object of abomination to Thy Father, and from my birth was a child of wrath.§

And Thou wast taken with a tender love for this wretch, and Thy most pure soul allied itself to my defiled soul. A new Jonathan, Thou didst love a son of death, the object of Thy Father's just aversion.

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* Heb. i.
† Col. i. 13.
‡ Job, x. 22.
§ Eph. ii. 3.

Thou didst despoil Thyself to clothe him, Thou didst swear an eternal friendship to him, Thou didst expose Thyself to the paternal frown to save him.*

O Jesus, Adam my father owed more than ten thousand talents to his Lord, and having nothing to pay, he was sold, together with his sad companion and his deplorable children.† And Thou didst say one day, "What have I here, for My people is taken away for naught." ‡ And Thou saidst to our cruel master who held us in his iron bondage, "Return them to Me," § I will be surety for their debt. And this debt, O Jesus, Thou hast paid to the very last cent.

Vainly did the Sage say, "A foolish man will clap hands when he is surety for his friend." ‖ This folly, O Jesus, was Thine, and it was not for friends, but enemies, that Thou becamest answerable.

O Jesus, what a mystery this is! It was I that sent Thee to Thy death, and Thy death has given me life. I shed Thy blood, O Divine Abel, O my Brother, and that blood has cried to Heaven, but instead of pleading for vengeance, it has asked for my pardon.¶ And this voice God has heard, and imprinted upon my brow a sign that shelters me from all the strokes of Justice, and my soul, upon which this innocent blood fell, instead of being accursed, has been blessed.

O Jesus, the new Joseph! I have sold Thee by the hands of Judas, and, although sold by me, Thou hast bought me. By the hands of the soldiers, I have stripped Thee of Thy garment, and, though denuded by me, Thou hast clothed me with Thy righteousness,

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* 1 Kings, xviii.
† St. Matt. xviii.
‡ Isaias, lii. 5.
§ Isaias, xlii.
‖ Prov. xvii. 18.
¶ Heb. xii.

Thou hast clothed me with Thyself.* By the hands of Thy executioners I have plunged Thee in a darksome prison, and, captive as Thou wert, Thou hast extricated me from the terrible dungeon of corruption and death. Seated at the right hand of the King of kings, Thou hast avenged my perfidies only by conferring more benefits. Thou hast given me, not the land of Gessen, but heaven itself. Thou hast fed me, not with corn from Egypt, but with the Bread of angels.

O Jesus, the new Isaac! Like the son of Abraham, Thou didst carry upon Thy shoulders the wood of sacrifice. Like him Thou didst witness the paternal hand lift against Thine innocent head the sacrificial knife. But God was satisfied with the obedience of the holy child, not that He could not have restored him to life, but because He wished to spare the great Patriarch the pain of immolating his own son, and the son the pain of dying at his father's hand. It was not thus with Thee, O Jesus! While a ram, emblem of sinners,† was sacrificed in the place of Isaac, Thy Father sacrificed Thee in the place of sinners.

O Jesus! who will ever love like Thee? What friend, or father, or mother, or spouse? No, there has never existed a lover like Thee, and never can.

O Jesus! what more couldst Thou have done for me if I had been Thy God, and Thy happiness had been in my hands?‡ What can I render unto Thee for so much love?

O Jesus, if in order to please Thee I gave all I possess to the poor, I should have done nothing.§

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* Gal. iii.

† St. Matt. xxv. 33.

‡ St. Thomas Aquinas.

§ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

If to follow Thee I left father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife, children, it would still be little.*

If for the sake of Thy glory I shed all my blood, if I consented to be stoned like Stephen, or slowly burnt like Laurence, it would not be sufficient.†

What shall I do then, O Christ Jesus?

Ah, I hear Thee say: "It is not thy blood which I ask of thee, not thy blood, but thy heart!"

A thousand times, O Jesus, Thou hast asked it of me, and a thousand times I have ungratefully refused to give it.

How couldst Thou endure my contempt? Why didst Thou not reject me altogether after a first refusal?

But I have decided. From this time forward I wish to begin to love Thee. From this time forward I give Thee this wretched heart, which Thou deignest to ask for, or rather I implore Thee to ravish it from me and hide it in Thine own.

Yes, at the foot of the cross, where Thou didst agonize, I sacrifice to Thee this affection for (*here name it*), which hinders the reign of Thy love in my heart.

That which Thou also requirest of me, O Christ, O Jesus, is that I labor for the salvation of my brethren; that I answer for them to Thy Father, as Thou hast answered for me; that I aid Thee in this painful task, which is still Thine in the bosom of Thy glory. That, like the Apostle, I may supplement in my flesh that which was lacking in Thy passion,‡ that after having caused Thee so many times to drink gall, I may cause Thee to drink of the salvation of souls.

Yes, I make this resolve in the presence of Thy

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* St. Matt. xix. 29. † 1 Cor. xiii.

‡ Col. i. 24

cold and bleeding body—in presence of Thy Heart about to still its throbbings. Each day I will ask of Thy Father the conversion of sinners, the return of Thy wandering sheep. Each day I will offer to Him, in union with Thy precious blood, the sacrifice of my tears and contrition in behalf of impenitent sinners.

O Mary immaculate! O Queen of the Sacred Heart, obtain for me the grace to be faithful to my resolutions till my latest breath. Amen.

Practice.

Do not be satisfied with a vague resolution, but fix upon and clearly specify the sacrifice which you wish to make to the Heart of Jesus, and the means you intend to adopt in order to co-operate in the salvation of men.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Last Legacy.

RECAPITULATION OF WHAT JESUS HAS ALREADY DONE FOR US.—HE WISHES TO BEQUEATH US A LAST LEGACY.—MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.—HER PART IN THE MYSTERY OF REDEMPTION.

> "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother. . . . When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing, whom He loved, He saith to His Mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to His disciple: Behold thy mother."—St. John, xix. 25, 26, 27.

Let us return to Calvary. Jesus is near His end. His body is already cold and livid, and His hands and feet are becoming rigid. His heart is now struggling with death. Its irregular and painful throbbings are slower and slower. Death will triumph over Him. But what am I saying? Let us forget that He is the mighty God, and that no man taketh away His life against His will.* Had He been an ordinary man, He would have long since died. The grotto of Gethsemani would have received His last sigh. He will die, then, when He wills; and if He still breathes, it is doubtless because He has not yet fulfilled all the task imposed upon Him by His Sacred Heart.

In the profound silence of astounded Nature, while all existences seem to be in travail-pangs awaiting the

* St. John, x. 18.

birth of the sons of God, favored by the thick darkness that covers the face of the earth, let us collect our thoughts and meditate at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

What generosity, what devotedness He has manifested up to this moment in pursuit of our redemption! What lessons, but above all what examples, He has given us! If, like the Pharisees, He had been satisfied to teach without practising, if He had laden our shoulders with intolerable burdens while He refused to touch them with the end of His finger,* His teachings would have availed us little. But He knew that human weakness has need of energy, even more than of enlightenment, and that nothing would be so calculated to stimulate our cowardice as His example.

To cure us of our attachment to this world's goods, Jesus not only said, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," but, the first to enter upon this path, He chose for parents a poor virgin and a poor artisan, and for palace a stable. Those glorious hands, whose simple touch was one day to multiply the loaves on behalf of His hearers, He made horny with toil. He had not whereon to lay His head. Later on He selected His disciples from among the poor, and, being unable any longer to gain His bread by manual labor, He subsisted upon alms. When no one gave Him anything, He sought some wild fruits upon the wayside trees; and when He found none, He waited.† Our foolish pride was the primary source of all our woes. He was not content to say merely, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," but He Himself went to encounter humiliations and insults of every kind. Not satisfied with the obscurity in which He allowed His infancy and youth to pass, He willed to endure stripes

* St. Matt. xxiii. 4. † St. Mark, xi.

and mockery, blows and spitting. Great and small, priests and people, kings and soldiery, agreed together to abase Him, to destroy Him, to ruin His honor, and to drag Him through the mire. And He suffered all without a murmur. One would have thought that He eminently deserved it all, that there was no place so defiled as His countenance, no head so guilty, no name so infamous as His. It seemed as if, by exhausting every form of insult, He wished henceforth to shelter all the wretched from human cowardice, as well as shelter sinners from the Divine Justice.

To induce us to mortify our flesh, Jesus not only said, "Take up your cross, renounce yourself, learn to suffer," but, like a tender mother when her babe refuses a necessary remedy, He first drank of the cup of suffering, that He might be able to say, "Take courage! Ought you to be more delicate than I was?"* Not satisfied with tasting the bitter drink, He drank long draughts of it, like a thirsty man who finds the fresh water, as though He had more right to it than all of us. His days were consumed in labors, His nights in prayers and tears. And now behold Him agonizing, drinking of death, suspended to a gibbet!† And it is here that His example becomes especially touching. It is from this elevation that, as He had predicted, He will draw all men unto Him.‡ Ah, let us never forget that which we have just seen and heard! He has prayed for His murderers and made excuses for them. He has promised Paradise upon an act of repentance. His enemies have defied Him to come down from the cross, promising to believe in Him if He did so. He prefers the shame of apparent defeat, and would rather pass for an impostor than to confound them by abandoning us to

* St. John, xv. † 1 St. Peter, iii. ‡ St. John, xii. 32.

our unhappy fate. They have said, "If God loves Him, let Him deliver Him, for He said, I am the Son of God." And He would rather save us from eternal opprobrium than to purge Himself from the charge of blasphemy. So did He fulfil to the very uttermost His word, "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." It was thus that He loved us!

And yet all is not accomplished; the Heart of Jesus is not yet satisfied. Before leaving us finally, He desires to leave us a supreme token of His tenderness, to bequeath us a legacy. What will He leave us? What does He possess that He has not already given us? His Father? He has given Him to us. He has told us, "When ye pray, say, Our Father: and ye will no longer give this name but to the Father who is in heaven." His Spirit? He has given it; at least by anticipation. The communication of that Divine Spirit will be one of the fruits of His death. His knowledge? He has revealed to us all the secrets which He had learned of His Father. His merits? It was for us alone that He acquired them. His sacred flesh? He gave it up for us to the whips, the nails, the thorns. His precious blood? He has shed it for love of us, it has reddened the garden, the prætorium, the palace of Herod, the streets of Jerusalem, the column, the road to Calvary, the scourges, and the hands of the executioners. His Heart, His veins, are empty, and to crown His prodigal tenderness, He wills that His ministers shall reproduce it, together with His adorable flesh, to nourish us each time that we so desire. He does not even possess clothing,—they have just divided His garments and gambled for them beneath His gaze, as if to show Him that He is cast out of the society of the living, and He no longer needs anything but a shroud.

O Jesus, there remains nothing for Thee to bestow upon us; Thou hast but to breathe Thy last sigh and thus place the seal upon our redemption. But what do I see? Thy dying glance seeks something; it stays upon Mary, and seems for a moment to revive. Mary, the chief work of Thy power and goodness; Mary, Thy creature and Thy Mother; Mary, the faithful guardian of Thine infancy, the inseparable companion of Thy youthful labors, of the delights of Thy Heart. Great Lord, a doubt arises in my mind! Why needs she be here? Couldst not Thou spare her the sight of Thy death? When Thou didst exact from Abraham, Thy friend, the sacrifice of his beloved Isaac, Thou permittedst it to be concealed from Sara. Mary was not at Thabor, why is she at Calvary? Dost Thou pity her less than the mother of Isaac?

Let us banish such language. What comparison can be instituted between Sara and Mary? The former was only a type, a shadow of the latter. What the mother of a simple man cannot do, the mother of a God can. God Himself wills it, this is the mystery.

The Eternal Father has raised Mary after a manner to His own level. He communicated to her His divine fecundity, and surrounded her with all the virtues,* in order that while remaining a virgin she might at the same time give birth to this same Son whom He had engendered from all eternity. But His designs respecting this incomparable woman were not limited to this. God resolved that His creatures should participate in the divine sonship, that His Son should be *the first-born among many brethren.* And to accomplish this, He willed that this beloved Son should purify them in His blood, and render them worthy of this exceeding glory. It

* St. Luke, i.

was thus that God loved the world. Well, Mary will not remain alien to this great work. She will be the mother of God's children, the new Eve, the veritable *mother of all the living*. But if the giving of birth to her *First-born* * cost her no pains, ah! in giving birth to her younger children, the brethren of her Son, she, like all other women, will be subjected to the sentence pronounced against the first Eve, *In dolore paries filios*,—"In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." The pleasure of Eve was the cause of our death, the pain of Mary will be the source of our life. It is to her that those words, spoken by Jesus yesterday to His friends, specially apply: "A woman when she is in labor is in sorrow."† O Mary, this dreaded hour has come for thee!

Look at Mary. Pale, weakened, unable to relieve her heart any longer with her moans, she can do nothing more than look upon her Jesus. She languishes, she agonizes with Jesus. All the wounds of Jesus are marked as if with a sword of steel upon her motherly heart. Like Jesus, she lives only by a miracle. And yet, have you observed her attitude? Is she lying unconscious in the arms of Magdalen, as some have represented her? No. Those painters cannot have read the gospels. St. John, who was there present, saw her standing.‡ She stood upright, in the attitude of a priest at the altar; in the attitude of Abraham offering up Isaac; in the attitude, if I may dare to say so, of the Eternal Father Himself sacrificing His Son, repulsing Him from His bosom, smiting Him, that we might be able to cry, *Abba*, *Pater*, my Father, my Father, while His Son can only say, "My God, my God!" §

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* St. Luke, ii. 7.
† St. John, xvi. 21.
‡ St. John, xix.
§ St. Matt. xxvii. 46.

Doubtless, to spare the least suffering to a Son in whom she also beheld her God, Mary, the most affectionate of creatures, and the most perfect of mothers, would willingly have endured a thousand deaths. But the salvation of our souls demanded the death of the God-man. The Father willed it, and Mary, again imbued with the virtue of the strength of the Highest, willed it also. Again she said, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." Formerly she had shared with the Father the glory of engendering a God; to-day she shares His immense generosity and love to men, and, like Him, she loves the world so much as to give it her only Son.

Well, O faithful soul, is she not indeed our mother? If the woman who gave death to us all before giving us life bears yet the sacred name of mother, by what name will you call the woman who restores life to us at the cost of the blood of such a Son?

But there was wanting to this mystery of love and sorrow the consecration of the creative utterance of the Word. The consent of the Father and of the Mother were necessary to the sacrifice of the Son, and it was but just that the First-born of God and of Mary should be heard in the matter of our adoption. He must say in a solemn and authentic manner whether He is not ashamed of us,* whether He consents or not to receive us as His brethren. What moment could be so opportune for such a declaration than that of His last agony, when heaven and earth and hell are in suspense with their gaze riveted upon Him?

Silence, my soul, Jesus is about to speak. Mary perceives it; she lends her ear attentively to the words of the Divine One dying.

* Heb. ii. 11.

"Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy mother!"

O my soul! let us meditate, let us meditate at leisure, upon these words, more penetrating than a sword to Mary, sweeter than a honeycomb for sinners.

Woman! Why, Lord Jesus, didst Thou apply this name to Mary? Dost Thou recognize her no longer as Thy Mother? Has she become a stranger to Thee? Is this the comfort she expects from Thee at this moment? Is this the parting farewell of the best of sons to the best of mothers? And the remainder of the phrase corresponds to this word. Thou givest Thy friend to her for a son, but Thou dost not say, "Love John as a son, and in return he will console you for My absence," for this recommendation was unnecessary. But Thou sayest, "Behold thy son." Behold henceforth the object of your affection, of your love and solicitude, let him occupy in your motherly heart the place which I have filled up till now. It is not simply a recommendation, it is an exchange. Thou givest to Mary the disciple instead of the Master, the son of Zebedee instead of the Son of God; John instead of Jesus, a pure man instead of a true God. This in all probability was the sword which Simeon had previously foretold to Mary. Her soul was pierced through, her maternal heart, like Rachel's, was broken when she gave birth to her second son, the son of her sorrow.

O Jesus, I think I comprehend the mystery of Thy words. Thou callest Thy Mother "*Woman*," for the same reason that Thou callest Thy Father *God*. Thy Father has in a manner cast Thee out, and treated Thee as an enemy,* in order to convey His tenderness to sinners, and to treat them as His children. This is why Thou darest not any longer call Him Father, but in

* Job, xiii. 24.

Thy exceeding pain, criest out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"*

Mary became Thy Mother, and gave Thee human life in saying to the angel, *Fiat!* "Be it done to me according to thy word." To-day she becomes the mother of mankind, she bestows upon them the divine life, the life of grace, in saying to the Eternal Father, *Fiat!* "Let Thy will be done. Let Jesus die, that at this cost man may live!" She seems thus to prefer us to Thee, O Jesus; and one of the Fathers assures us that had God required it of her, she would have sacrificed Thee with her own hands, after the example of Abraham. So that at this moment she is more Thy judge than Thy Mother. Ought we to wonder if Thou callest her "Woman," and if, showing her Thy friend, or rather, all humanity represented by John, Thou sayest, "Behold thy son"?

Behold thy son! This, O Divine Word, is one of those creative words which change the nature of things, and which perform all that they signify. Not only does it reveal to Mary her new dignity, her duty toward mankind, but Thou thereby impartest to the admirable woman whom Thou no longer callest Mother, a mother's heart for the children of Adam. Thy word is like a two-edged sword,† it opens the heart of the Virgin Mary in order that we may enter it. Doubtless this was a terrible blow to her, but it was necessary to our happiness. Thy Father so loved us that He sacrificed Thee on our behalf. Thy Mother so loved us as to consent to the sacrifice, and Thou in Thy turn didst so love us as to sacrifice Thy Mother's heart, even to say as did the Levites of old, to their fathers and mothers, "I know you no more."‡ Woman, what is there in

* St. Matt. xxvii. 46. † Apoc. i. 16. ‡ Deut. xxxiii. 9.

common between thee and Me?* Why fix thy gaze still upon Me? Thou art looking for thy son,—there he is, or rather there they are. Lift up thine eyes and see, all the children of Eve assemble themselves and come unto thee, thy sons come from the most distant countries, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Let thy heart then open and be enlarged, receive them to thy bosom, they shall trust in the protection of thy wings.

Behold thy son! O Jesus, have I heard aright? Is it to Mary that Thou speakest, and is it I whom Thou givest to her for a son? Am I at liberty to believe it, or am I not the plaything of a dream?

Yes, it is really I, I can no longer doubt. Thy nailed hands could not point me out, so lest any doubt should remain in my soul, Thou didst add, speaking to me, "Behold thy mother!"

Behold thy mother! Thou hast well said, O Jesus, that none ever loved as Thou; O how little Thou resemblest the princes of the earth! They are jealous of a vain title, of a power which death will soon snatch from them. They fear to derogate from their borrowed majesty if they allow a common person to enter the bosom of their families, or give the name of brother to a beggar.

But Thou, whose name is essential, and whose empire is eternal, seemest only to be occupied in lessening the distance that separates Thee from the wretched children of Adam.

Thou hast already given us to Thy Father as children, and lo! on the very point of expiring, Thou leavest us Thy Mother as a last token of love.

But why, O Jesus, didst Thou choose this hour, so full

* St. John, ii.

of bitterness, to make us so sweet and precious a bequest? Thou mightest three days later have shown Thyself to Mary, all resplendent in the glory of Thy resurrection, and have said, "O My Mother, I will that the children of Eve may henceforth be thine, and you, My brethren, behold in her a mother."

Why then plunge the sword into this innocent heart so dear to Thyself? Why cause her so cruelly to feel that she is about to lose in Thee her sole treasure?

It is because Divine Justice has spoken. It has said that the birth of sinners shall be a painful birth.*

O how much my happiness has cost! The Father and the Mother agree to sacrifice their Son for my sake, and the Son, with the sword of His word, opens His Mother's heart!

The Father says: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The Mother says: "Let Thy will be done." And the Son says: "Woman, behold thy son."

The Son says to the Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He says to the children of Adam, "Ye have all but one same Father, He who is in heaven; and as for your mother, there she is, this woman whom you see standing at My feet."

O Jesus, we receive this gift, this supreme token of the ineffable tenderness of Thy Heart. But will Mary agree to it? Will she permit herself to be called the Mother of sinners, and may we from this moment change our name of children of Eve for that of children of Mary?

Ah, the pains that oppress her sufficiently prove that we are her children! Her lips are wan with agony, and from the bottom of her broken heart I think I hear a word go forth, at once the expression of her tenderness

* Gen. iii 16.

and of her anguish, the last word of dying Rachel, the touching formula of our adoption, the name which henceforth shall be ours.

"*Benoni!* O my sons, children of my sorrow! O ye that I bear a second time,* behold and see, is there any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

No, O our mother, there is no pain equal to thine, because there is no love equal to thine.

If St. Paul, constrained by the love of Christ, could give the name of birth-pangs to the torments of his zeal, by what name shall we designate thine at the foot of the cross!

O Eternal Father! O Jesus! O Mary! Shall I be always receiving at your hands, and never give any thing in return?

I often say in truth, O Father, Brother, Mother, I love you, here is my heart. I offer the tree, but when you search for the fruit, none is discoverable. Why have I not been accursed?

My love is confined to sentiments, to words, to tears; but works and sacrifices are what Thou requirest, and these are exactly what I refuse to give.

When I read these words in the Gospel: "If thou wilt be My disciple, renounce all that thou hast, take the cross upon thy shoulders, carry it all the days of thy life and walk in My footsteps," I find it too hard.

And I forget, O Jesus, that the servant ought not to be better treated than the Master. †

When I meet this sentence, also spoken by Thy divine lips: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, his wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple," I say to myself, How cruel this sentence is!

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* Gal. iv. † St. John, xv. 20.

And I do not reflect, O Father! O Jesus! O Mary! that I owe my life to a similar cruelty on your part, and that if ye had not been thus cruel, my eternal portion had been weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

When Thou comfortest me, when Thou caressest me as a feeble child, I say with Peter, as he quitted the Cenaculum, "Though I should die, I will not abandon Thee!"

But if Thou hidest Thyself for a moment, I cease immediately to seek for Thee. If sometimes Thou chastisest me as of the number of Thy children whom Thou wouldst mark with the seal of election, I flee far from Thy face, and say, I will return no more!

Born at the foot of the cross, of the blood of a God, and the tears of the Virgin, child of the pains of the new Eve, I would sing and rejoice with the old.

I fly from the natal tree, the nest in which the meek Pelican revives me with His blood, where the chaste Turtle Dove warms me beneath her wings.

And with that insensate one who gave me death ere she gave me life, I hasten to sit beneath the forbidden tree; beneath the tree whose fruit is poison, and whose very shade is mortal.

On the summit of Calvary Mary stands, agonizing, and I, I walk about like the wicked in the pastures of pleasure. *

And yet I dare to say that I love Thee; and while a distracted lover of pleasure, I dare call myself the brother of a crucified God, the son of the Queen of martyrs.

I am the enemy of the cross, † and yet I blush not to call myself the disciple of Christ!

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* Wisdom, ii.

† Phil. iii. 18.

But I resolve to begin anew. Henceforth I will more worthily sustain so glorious a name.

I lay at the feet of Jesus dying, of His Mother now become mine, the sacrifice which He has asked at my hands for so many years in vain.

And thou, O Mary, O my mother, be helpful to me! I implore thee by the blood of thy first born Son, aid the child of thy sorrows in his struggles with the old man, this body of sin.

Practice.

We are the children of God. The Holy Spirit tells us so in a hundred different places of the New Testament, and whoever pretends that this is but an empty word is a heretic. But it is the same Holy Spirit who assures us by the voice of tradition, based upon the words of Jesus Christ, that we are in a very true, and very serious sense the children of Mary. Since Mary, in order to become our mother, had to consent to the death of her Son Jesus, it is but just that she should find other Jesus's in us. Let us love then, love much, and love without ceasing, so good a mother. Let us strive to know her better and love her more. Let us never forget the groans,* the tears which our spiritual life and our eternal happiness have cost her.

An excellent practice, advised by St. Alphonsus, is to meditate at times upon the seven sorrows of Mary, or to devote each evening a few minutes to this meditation. (See the Treatise of St. Alphonsus upon this beautiful subject.)

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* Ecclus. vii. 29.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Mystery.

APPARITION OF JESUS RISEN FROM THE DEAD TO HIS MOTHER.—THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW MAN.—THE FIRST EVE AND THE SECOND.—AFFECTIONS.

> "Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle. . . No man ever hated his own flesh: but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church. Because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. This is a great sacrament."—Ephes. v. 25–32.

"WHO," says the wise man, "has measured the height of heaven, and the breadth of earth?" We may apply these words to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The Heart of Jesus is the new heaven promised by the prophets, for it is the chosen abode of the Most Holy Trinity. "In Him," says St. Paul, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead."* The heart of Mary is the new earth, equally predicted by the Holy Spirit,—the land of benediction; the earthly Paradise in which righteousness dwells, and where the new Adam takes his delight. But in the same way as none can measure the depth of that immense sphere which contains the stars, and which we call heaven, so none can gauge the depth and breadth and height of the Heart of Jesus.†

* Colossians, ii.

† Ephesians, iii.

And as no person has ever penetrated to the centre of the earth to sound its depths, so no person has ever estimated the vast capacity of the heart of Mary. It is therefore quite impossible for us to form an idea of the ardor with which Jesus loved His Mother, or the tenderness of Mary for her Son. These things are incomprehensible. Ineffable, consequently, was Mary's pain at beholding Jesus die. More ineffable still the pain of Jesus at seeing His Mother agonizing at the foot of the cross. He had to leave to another the task of comforting her.* After this, who can doubt that the first prompting of the Heart of Jesus after His resurrection was to hasten to His desolate Mother?

The joy of the widow of Naim was great when she saw her son come out of his coffin. And the joy of her son himself was very sweet when, aroused as from a profound slumber, and scarcely yet alive, he felt himself pressed to the bosom of her whose tenderness had obtained his resurrection.

But what tongue can describe the joy, the admiration, the transports of the most pure heart of Mary when, for the first time, she beheld her Son risen and glorious?

His sacred head was encircled with a luminous aureole, His eyes glittered as the lightning, His body had the splendor of molten steel;† miraculous garments whiter than the snow covered Him; rays of glory issued from the wounds in His hands and feet, and that in His side was brilliant as a sun. He enters the house to which Mary had retired through the closed door. At the sight, Mary remains stupefied, voiceless, speechless. Emotion renders her motionless and almost insensible; she looks upon her Son, and can do no more. At length Jesus recalls her to herself by addressing to her that

* St. John, xix. 26. † Apoc. i.

sweet word, "Mother!" And she, lifting up her voice with tears, rises from her seat, and would fling herself at His feet, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" But Jesus receives her in His arms, and gently pillows the dear head of His Mother upon His Heart. Then He makes her sit by His side, and regards her tenderly in silence.

It was revealed to St. Teresa that it took a long time for the Saviour to extricate His Mother from the ocean of grief in which she was plunged, and to induce her to open her heart to receive the torrent of joy which was to overflow it. Without a great miracle, so strong a shock might doubtless have broken the delicate thread which still linked together this holy soul and virginal body.

If every good son delights to give an hour of joy to his mother, if he would emphatically say, "For one of my mother's smiles I would give an empire," what must have been the happiness of the Heart of Jesus, recalling thus her own to life, and causing to flow in her veins the floods of heavenly beatitude with which He Himself was filled!

It would be rash to attempt to relate the words which passed between such a Son and such a Mother at such a moment. Only the angels who were the enraptured witnesses of the scene could say what they were. And if we try to say something upon this subject, it is to aid the pious reader to divine still further concerning it.

Jesus. Lift thyself up, O daughter of Sion; put off thy mourning apparel; shake off the dust of sadness which covers thee; the winter is over, the time of tears is past.

Mary. O my Lord and my God! Thou art then risen! and in Thy glory Thou hast not forgotten Thy

humble servant, and deignest to cast Thine eyes upon her lowliness. Blessed be Thou! My soul glorifies Thy holy name, and my heart shall ever celebrate Thy goodness.

JESUS. And to whom, O sweet Mother, do I owe the first fruits of my glorious life if not to her from whom I received my human life! Where can I delight if not among the lilies and the roses of my enclosed garden, beside my sealed fountain! Ah, in my glory I have not forgotten that Mary is my Mother, and while becoming her God I shall nevertheless be always her Son.

MARY. So then Thy glory has not altered Thy tenderness toward Thy poor servant; so then I may still call Thee Son, my beloved, my sweet Jesus?

JESUS. Jesus would forget Himself ere He would cease to love thee. Seated in the highest heavens at the right hand of His Father, before the holy angels and in the midst of the assembly of the elect, He will always call thee Mother!

MARY. O Jesus! O my Son, be Thou blessed! yea, a thousand times blessed for Thy goodness and tenderness. Oh, how long those days of separation seemed to Thy Mother's heart! I waited for Thee as land dried up by the ardent sun awaits the soft dews of the twilight.

JESUS. O my sweet Mother, how ardently I longed to see thee, to comfort thee! Yes, I hastened My departure from among the holy souls whom My presence rejoiced to come to thee! The hart wearied with the chase sighs not more earnestly after the fountain where he was wont to quench his thirst.

MARY. How beautiful Thou art, my beloved, how beautiful Thou art! Glory interpenetrates Thee, and makes Thee luminous: celestial felicity cannot contain itself within Thy heart, but issues from Thee like a divine exhalation in which Thou art bathed.

JESUS. And Thou also, My beloved, art beautiful. Thine eyes are purer than the dove's, sweeter than honey are the words that proceed from thy lips.

MARY. Thy brow, lately crowned with pain and scorn, is resplendent as the sun.

JESUS. More lively and more sweet is the splendor of Thy humility, O My Mother.

MARY. The nails that pierced Thy hands and feet have given place to rays more brilliant than the lightning.

JESUS. My Mother's blessed hands distil myrrh and spikenard.

MARY. But why, O my Son, have those wounds remained open?

JESUS. Those wounds, O my Mother, are the glorious trophies of My victory and eternal witnesses to My love. They are My most precious jewels. When man doubts My goodness, I will say to him, Reach hither thy finger, and after that dare to doubt. When My Father arms Himself with lightnings to strike the guilty, I will interpose My pierced hands and the avenging flame will not dare to pass.

MARY. But the wound in Thy side, my Jesus, may Thy Mother dare to look at it?

JESUS. Behold it, Mother.

MARY. Alas! how wide and deep it is! What! I can even see Thy Heart itself, it also is pierced! Was it necessary, O my Jesus, that Thou shouldst be thus wounded even after Thy death?

JESUS. Therein lies, My Mother, the profound and sweet mystery of My love.

MARY. Wilt Thou deign, Lord, to reveal it to Thy humble servant?

JESUS. On the day of creation, My Father and I, in union with the Holy Spirit, formed Adam, the common

father of mankind, of the slime of the earth, and we animated him with Our breath. He needed a companion, who should be the charm of his life and the mother of his posterity. In order that he might cherish her as his own flesh, we took her from out himself during his slumber; yes, we drew her from the bosom of Adam himself.

Adam fell, and then, instead of communicating to his children a pure and sanctified nature, he gave them a vitiated blood, containing the germs of sin and death. In this condition, man was incapable of restoring the heavenly ruins, that is, of occupying the thrones left void by the defection of the angels.

Meanwhile, the Divine Goodness could not brook to avow Himself conquered by His enemy. We therefore resolved to baffle the impious wiles of Satan, and to restore Our work. It was decided that a new Chief should be given to this race betrayed by its father, a Chief who should, by His voluntary humiliation and His perfect obedience, repair the pride and prevarication of the former, who should communicate to His spiritual posterity an element of eternal life,* and raise man at length to a superior state to that from which he fell.

This new Chief was I, the new Adam,† born upon the new earth, which is none other than thou, O My beloved Mother!

There was required therefore a new Eve, who should be the inseparable consort of the new Adam, who should become His delight and His glory, and be in a real sense *the Mother of all the living.*‡ This new Eve is My Church. In order that she may be most dear to Me, in order that she may know how much she owes to My love, My Father willed that she also, like the first Eve,

* 1 St. Peter, i. † 1 Cor. xv. ‡ Gen. iii. 20.

should be drawn forth from the very bosom of her husband.

Exhausted with fatigue, after having trodden alone the wine-press of the divine vengeance,* I slept upon the cross the profound sleep of death. I slept, but My Heart was awake. The soldier's lance (as thou sawest) opened My side, and immediately there came forth blood and water.†

Now this is the mystery of this blood and water. In the first place, the water, which is impregnated by the word of life,‡ and by the Spirit of God, effaces the ancient stain, and communicates to souls a new life, a celestial life like Mine own, and animates it with a spirit like Mine. It is from this water, this salutary bath, that My Bride has come forth, beautiful, spotless, without wrinkle, or any defect whatever. §

The blood is destined to nourish her, to strengthen her, to make her more and more God-like, and to pass from her bosom into the veins of her children.

Thus, in every one of My faithful there will be henceforth two men: *the animal and terrestrial man*, ‖ born of Adam, and always retaining something of the old leaven,¶ and *the spiritual and heavenly man*, born of Me, that must little by little absorb, consume, and destroy the former.**

While these great things were accomplished, I was present in spirit in this Heart, which had ceased to beat. My Father presented to Me My Bride, and, charmed with her beauty, I cried, "This is now bone of My bone and flesh of My flesh. I will be all for My Bride, she shall be all for Me. One and the same spirit shall animate us both."

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* Isaias, lxiii. 3. † St. John, xix. 34. ‡ Eph. v. 26.
§ Eph. v. 27. ‖ 1 Cor. ii. ¶ 1 Cor. v. 7. ** Rom. vi.

It is to honor this mystery that I have established the oneness and indissolubility of marriage among my faithful ones.

MARY. O my Son, Thy words make me tremble for joy. My heart melts with tenderness at sight of the marvellous inventions of Thy love. Who will relate them to the people of the earth? Ah, how happy Thy disciples will be to see Thee! If Thou hadst seen the tears of John, my beloved son, if Thou hadst heard the sobs of Peter, for a moment unfaithful! James, my sister's son, has sworn neither to eat nor drink until he beheld Thee risen.* And Magdalen! Ah, how that poor child loves Thee! At this moment she is gone to Thy tomb with Salome and Mary, to shed, as once before, over Thy feet her tears and precious ointments.

JESUS. I will go and comfort her.

MARY. Lord, wilt Thou ascend soon to Thy Father?

JESUS. In a few days, My Mother.

MARY. May I dare, Lord, address to Thee a last question? What is to become of Thy servant? Must she languish long upon this earth far from Thee? That which Thou saidst to John and myself makes me fear so.

JESUS. Yes, dearest Mother, such is My Father's will. I must leave My disciples before the advent of the Divine Paraclete. I will leave you to them, to habituate them little by little to dispense with My visible presence, to console them for My absence, as the moon compensates men for the absence of the sun. But fear not; without appearing, I shall be ever present with you and them.

MARY. Thou willest it, Lord, that is enough. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to Thy word!"

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* A tradition.

After this interview, Jesus embraces His Mother, and leaves her, to comfort Magdalen, and strengthen the wavering faith of His apostles.

*Affections and Prayers.**

O Jesus! How good, how sweet it is, to dwell in Thy Heart! It is in this Temple, in this Holy of Holies, in this Ark of the Covenant, that I adore and praise the name of the Lord. Yes, it is in Thy Heart, O sweet Jesus, which is also my heart, that I pray to Thee. Receive my prayers within this sanctuary, where every prayer is heard, or rather draw me wholly within Thy Heart.

O Jesus! Thou Beauty, eclipsing all created beauty, purify me from my stains, in order that I may enter within Thy Heart, and abide there always, doing Thy will!

Because it was for this that Thy Heart was pierced, that an entry might be opened to us, and that in this sacred refuge we might find a shelter from all outside troubles.

It was pierced, too, that through the visible wound we might behold the invisible wound which love has made.

Who then will not love this Heart, so cruelly torn? Who will not love it in return for so much love? Who will not embrace this chaste Heart?

Ah! let us love it with all our powers. Let us embrace our amiable Wounded One, whose hands and feet and side and Heart the wicked have pierced, and suffer Him not to depart until in His turn He has wounded with the arrows of His love our hard and impenitent hearts.

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* From St. Bernard.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A Revenge.

THE LAST CHAPTER OF ST. JOHN.—ST. PETER'S TRIPLE ACT OF LOVE.—AFFECTIONS.

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"—St. John, xxi. 16.

As a conclusion to this series of studies on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we will place before the reader one of the last acts of the Saviour's life on earth,—the Sacred Heart's revenge. A revenge! You may perhaps exclaim: The author is departing from the plan of the work, instead of giving it the finishing touch. The epigraph, "Behold how He loved," promised only sweetness and kindness. Be not deceived, dear reader; love, without ceasing to be love, always has its revenges. Offended love sometimes becomes cruel, but its cruelties are frequently more valuable than its caresses. Does not the Holy Spirit tell us the jealousies of love are more inflexible than hell, more devouring than flames?* Does He not show us the Bridegroom revenging a trifling negligence on the part of the Bride, by fleeing far from her and closing His ears to the cries she raises for His return?†

Now, the Heart of Jesus had been offended by one of His dearest friends. And it was no slight negligence that He had to reproach him with, but an outrage.

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* Cant. viii. † Cant. v.

Peter, intimidated by a simple maid-servant, had thrice denied Him. Was not this a case, if any ever was, to be revenged?

But what chastisement could be proportioned to such an affront? Adam had to do penance during nine centuries for having eaten the forbidden fruit. Doubtless nine thousand years will barely suffice to expiate the crime of Peter. Or rather, he will not suffer at all; but what suffering could not accomplish in even so long a period, love will accomplish in an instant. Let us listen to the narrative of the Holy Gospel. It is the apostle of love, the historian of the Sacred Heart, it is John who will relate to us this wondrous vengeance, and at the same time teach us how we can repair our transgressions against Him who is all love.

It was some time after the Saviour's resurrection.* To procure the material for a meal, Peter, in company with Thomas, James, and John, had been fishing all night upon the lake of Tiberias. But they had caught nothing. In the morning the Saviour goes down to the shore of the lake and there stops, quite unrecognized by His disciples. "Children," He says, "have you any fish?" "No." "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find." They did so, and drew out such a multitude of fishes that they could not get the net out of the water. At this sign the virgin apostle, or, as he loved to call himself, *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, recognized Jesus. "It is the Lord," he remarked to Peter, and immediately the latter felt the wounds which repentance had made in his heart reopen. He burns to throw himself at his Master's feet. Two hundred furlongs still separate them, and the boat goes so

* St. John, xxi.

slowly! What shall he do? Will he ask his Master, as formerly, to allow him to walk upon the water?* He does not consider himself any longer worthy. His mind is made up. Putting on his fisher coat, and forgetting the fine catch they had just made, forgetting to come to the assistance of his companions, forgetting even the danger he was risking, he throws himself into the sea, and arrives upon the beach. And while his fellow-disciples painfully haul the net filled with fishes, he has already reached his Master's feet, which he embraces; already filled with emotion, he contemplates the features of his Beloved. What an admirable example of an absolute detachment from all creatures, and at the same time of the contemplative life! Who does not recollect Mary Magdalen sitting at the feet of Jesus and tasting in perfect repose the sweetness of His words while Martha worries and fatigues herself? Here, also, as at Bethany, it is penitent love that has chosen the better part, and receives the first fruits of the endearments of the Beloved.†

We speak of endearments and we began by speaking of revenge. But are not endearments, according to the testimony of St. Teresa, the cruelest vengeance that can be drawn from a loving heart? Let us return to our subject.

Peter, so prompt to fly to his Master, is not less prompt in obeying Him. At a word from Him, he returns to the boat, drags the net to land, and lays the fish at the Saviour's feet. The latter had already miraculously provided bread and a fire kindled on the shore. When the preparations for the meal were terminated, He fills, as He was wont, the post of servant,

* St. Matt. xiv. 28. † St. Luke, x. 42.

and with His glorious hands He offers to each one bread and fish.

At last the repast is ended, and the hour of vengeance has come.

Jesus fixes upon the apostle, lately faithless, that serious and tender glance, which once before had pierced his soul, and opened in his eyes an inexhaustible fount of tears.* Peter is troubled, his heart is broken, and melts with regret and tenderness, and he remains as if reduced to nothing. He would lower his eyes, but in those of the Master there is a power that arrests his as by a charm. If the glance of a loving soul wounds the Heart of Jesus, † what would be the effect of the glance of that God, the Lover of our souls, when He encounters a heart disposed like that of Simon Peter? Probably the penitent would have succumbed beneath so much violence save for a miracle.

Is this enough? No. Justice is undoubtedly satisfied, but the claims of love are wider. The Divine Master's look has penetrated to his inmost heart; His living word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword, will penetrate even to the marrow of his bones, and separate soul and body.‡ The soul of Peter must be melted by the words of the Beloved.§ Listen. "Peter, lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter had denied his Master, the other disciples had only abandoned Him. Peter had sinned most, he therefore ought to love most. ‖

But what a blow to a heart repentant and already inflamed! These words instantly placed before the eyes of Peter all the claims of Jesus to his love. He recol-

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* St. Luke, xxii.
† Cant. iv. 9.
‡ Heb. iv. 12.
§ Canticles, v.
‖ St. Luke, x.

lects that happy day when, upon these same shores, he was called by Him to leave his boat and his nets to become *a fisher of men.* He recalls the numerous marks of predilection that he had received at His hands, that memorable moment when he had the honor to proclaim the divinity of the Son of man, and was honored in his turn by being proclaimed the foundation of the Church, and the bearer of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He recalls the Transfiguration, then the Supper: Jesus on His knees before him washing his feet, and subsequently presenting to him His adorable flesh under the mystical form of bread. Then that harrowing scene at Gethsemani, and the deplorable moment when, after so many protestations of fidelity, he denied his God three times! Those words, "I know not the man," "I know not what thou sayest," "If I die, I do not know the man," resounded in his ears. Then he seems to hear the accusing crow of the cock, and sees the meek and holy Victim turn toward him His ensanguined eyes. All these scenes presented themselves to him in the twinkling of an eye, and, joined with this question of the Conqueror of death and hell, they produced in his soul a commingling of pain and love, of sweetness and bitterness that no words can describe. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

"*Feed My lambs!*"

Doubtless, this is enough. No. The Heart of Jesus is not yet disarmed. His inexorable tenderness is not yet satisfied. A second time He plunges into the soul of Peter the flaming sword of His love. A second time He delivers him over to all the lacerations of a repentant love, and a loving repentance, by this question, so simple, yet signifying so much:

"Peter, lovest thou Me?"

And a second time Peter replies, with an ever-increasing emotion, and a voice full of tears, "Yea, Lord, I love Thee!"

"*Feed My sheep!*"

Peter had denied Him three times. The vengeance of the Heart of Jesus is therefore still incomplete. But here it becomes cruel. He feigns to doubt the love of His disciple, and assuming a more piercing tone, and fixing upon him a still deeper look, He says for the third time, "Peter, lovest thou Me?" Then Peter could no longer contain himself; he bursts into sobs, his tears flow, and, with a choked voice, he replies: "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

"*Feed My sheep!*"

Thus, at last, love is appeased. The outrage is repaired, and superabundantly repaired, for Jesus adjudges to Peter the finest recompense which the apostle could covet here below. "In thy old age," He says, "thou shalt follow Me." That is to say, as the Evangelist explains, "thou shalt die the same death as Myself."

This is the manner in which Jesus revenges the infidelities of His friends. He feigns to doubt their affection, He flies from their endearments, He hides Himself, and seems to leave us all alone in order that we may seek for Him.* But He is not far away. He is there *looking through the lattices*,† and by His silence asks to hear our voice.‡ Let us, then, say to Him from the bottom of our hearts, three times,—a hundred times,—*Amo Te*, "Lord, I love Thee," and He will yield to our embraces.

* Canticles, v. † Canticles, ii. 9.

‡ Canticles, viii. 13.

Behold here also a means of reassuring our souls regarding past sins. However criminal we may have been; if, like Peter, we have thrice denied our Saviour; if we can only sincerely say to Him, "Lord, I love Thee more than I love myself, more than any creature, and I love Thee because of Thy infinite kindness;" or, including all this in a single phrase, simply say, *Amo Te*, "I love Thee," and provided we are disposed to do everything that He exacts from us in reparation for our faults, we may rest tranquil.* Those words, "I love Thee," extinguish the lightnings in the hand of our Judge; and I dare say that if a soul already condemned could say them as it descended into hell, these words, like wings of fire, would carry it up to heaven. If Satan, in the bottom of his terrible prison, could once say, "Lord, I love Thee," he would immediately become an angel of light. Unhappily, neither the reprobate nor the demons are capable of loving! This is, indeed, the essence of their misery.

Act of Love.†

I love Thee, O my God! I love Thee, and would love Thee more and more. Grant me the grace, O Jesus, Thou fairest of the children of men, grant me the grace to desire Thee, and love Thee as much as I wish and as much as I ought. Thou art immensity, and ought to be loved without bounds, especially by us for whom Thou hast done so many marvels.

O Love that burnest ever, and art never extin-

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* The first reparation is well understood to be the confession of the sin to a priest. God requires this, even when, through His perfect charity, He has forgiven us prior to confession.

† From St. Augustine.

guished, sweet Christ, good Jesus, O Charity, O my God, inflame all my being with this fire, which is none other than Thyself! Kindle my heart with love for Thee. Grant that I may languish to possess Thee, Thou who art only Goodness and Sweetness; that I may be thrilled with joy at the remembrance of Thy loveliness and tenderness; that I may burn for Thee and for Thy sacred delights with that ardor which is holy, good, chaste, and pure. Grant that, wholly filled with the infinite sweetness of Thy love, and consumed like incense by the flame of Thy charity, I may love Thee, sweetest and most beautiful Lord, with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength, with a contrite heart, with a great abundance of tears, with a great reverence and a holy fear.

Be always and everywhere in my heart, upon my lips, and before my eyes, that there may no longer remain in me any room for profane loves.

EPILOGUE.*

THE GREATNESS AND THE LOWLINESS OF THE SPOUSE OF SOULS.

"Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised."—Psalm, xlvii. 1.

"The Lord is small and infinitely worthy of love."—St. Bernard.

My soul hath desired Thee in the night; I sought Thee, O my Spouse, but I found Thee not. I will rise and seek my Beloved. The watchmen of the city found me. O ye that pass by the way, saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?

The Angels. Who is thy Spouse, O beautiful Sulamitess, what is His name?

The Soul. My Beloved is the fairest of the children of men, He is whiter than the lily, more ruddy than the rose, His countenance breathes love, and His name is Jesus.

The Angels. What, thou darest to claim as thy hus-

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* This last chapter is a sort of spiritual posy, as a remembrance of the month of the Sacred Heart. As it is almost entirely composed of flowers culled in the fields of the Divine Scriptures, it would be fastidious to cite references. The angels relate the greatness of Jesus, either as God or in His glorified humanity. The soul, or the spouse of the Sacred Heart, relates the abasement of the Saviour in His mortal life.

band our King, the immortal King of ages? His name is great and terrible; His name alone causes all to tremble, and every knee to bow in heaven, and earth, and in hell!

The Soul. His name is sweeter to mine ears than the tones of the harp; more delightsome to my mouth than a honeycomb. No pleasure can so rejoice the heart. His name alone makes me to awaken from sleep, and to thrill with consolation when I watch.

The Angels. But He is great and magnificent, yea, grandeur and magnificence itself. He is worthy of all praise.

The Soul. My Beloved is humble, little, and without splendor. He is worthy of all love!

The Angels. He is the living likeness of the Ancient of Days.

The Soul. He is like me in all things.

The Angels. He was born before the Aurora, from the bosom of the Eternal, in the splendors of the sanctuary.

The Soul. He was born of a mortal, a lowly virgin, in the stable of Bethlehem.

The Angels. The immense arch of heaven cannot contain Him.

The Soul. I have seen Him lying in a manger, shut up in a tomb.

The Angels. He dwelleth in the inaccessible Light, and is called Wonderful, the Mighty God.

The Soul. He dwelleth among us and is called Emmanuel.

The Angels. His eyes dart lightnings, He looketh upon the earth and it quaketh.

The Soul. His eyes are two burning arrows, one single glance of His has ravished my heart.

The Angels. His voice is all-powerful. His voice

doeth wonders. It breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. His voice is like the roar of the clashing waves. He speaks, and the mountains melt like wax, the heavens are folded up like a scroll, His enemies return to dust.

THE SOUL. The voice of my Beloved is soft as the breath of the zephyr that scarcely bows the blade of grass. His voice is not heard in public places; He does not cry aloud, nor dispute. When my Beloved speaks, my soul dissolves with pleasure.

THE ANGELS. Out of His mouth goeth a two-edged sword.

THE SOUL. His mouth distils honey.

THE ANGELS. His word penetrates to the very marrow of the bones.

THE SOUL. It diffuses health and strength.

THE ANGELS. He is crowned with glory.

THE SOUL. He is crowned with thorns.

THE ANGELS. His shoulders are covered with a mantle of beauty and splendor.

THE SOUL. I see upon His shoulders a mantle of derision.

THE ANGELS. His garments are whiter and more dazzling than the snow, purer than the light.

THE SOUL. His garments are red, like those of the vine-dresser who treads the grapes in the wine-press. His robe is dyed with blood.

THE ANGELS. He is clothed with might.

THE SOUL. He is encompassed with infirmity.

THE ANGELS. In His hand is a rod of iron.

THE SOUL. In His hand is a reed.

THE ANGELS. He breaks His enemies to pieces as one breaks a vessel of clay.

THE SOUL. My Beloved healeth those that are broken in heart, He will not quench the smoking flax.

The Angels. His terrible arm disperses the proud, abases the arrogant, and overturns thrones.

The Soul. He lifteth up the poor from the earth, to make him sit among princes, yea, upon His own throne.

The Angels. A devouring fire goeth before Him to burn up His enemies.

The Soul. My Beloved came to cast fire upon the earth; all His desire is to enkindle souls.

The Angels. His arrows are sharp; beneath His strokes the people shall fall; He shall pierce the heart of all His enemies.

The Soul. Alas! my Beloved had His own heart pierced by the soldier's lance.

The Angels. What present canst thou pretend to offer Him? He is infinitely rich. His are all the flowers of the valleys, the harvests of the fields, the fruit of the hills. The sea is His with all that it contains; the heaven is His palace, and earth His footstool.

The Soul. My Beloved is poor, He is a mendicant, He has not even a stone where He may rest His head.

The Angels. Wilt thou offer Him a sacrifice? All the beasts of the forest are not sufficient for His holocaust, nor the cedars of Lebanon to consume the victims.

The Soul. He will be satisfied with my heart. Every day He says to me, "My child, give Me thy heart!"

The Angels. He is worshipped by all the angels of God.

The Soul. He was buffeted by valets.

The Angels. He is the Judge of the living and the dead.

The Soul. He Himself was judged.

The Angels. The holiest of the prophets is unworthy to bear the shoes of his feet.

THE SOUL. He has washed my feet.*

THE ANGELS. His fan is in His hand, and He will scatter sinners as the chaff is rejected from the wheat.

THE SOUL. He Himself was rejected by the people.

THE ANGELS. He will bind them hand and foot, and cast them forth into the outer darkness.

THE SOUL. The hands of my Beloved were loaded with bonds. What do I say! His hands were pierced, likewise His feet. His hands and His feet were pierced with nails.

THE ANGELS. What terror will seize upon mortals in the day of His coming!

THE SOUL. What will be my joy in the day of His triumph!

THE ANGELS. Mortals shall wither as grass before the burning rays of the sun.

THE SOUL. My flesh shall flourish like the lily, and like the palm.

THE ANGELS. They will say, "Hills fall upon us! Mountains cover us!"

THE SOUL I will say, "Come, return, my Beloved, like a gazelle, or a fawn upon the mountains of Bether."

THE ANGELS. They shall hide themselves like wild beasts in caves and holes of the earth.

THE SOUL. As the white dove conceals itself in the hollow of the rock, I will hide myself in the wound of His Heart.

THE ANGELS. O beautiful Sulamitess, great is thy love; it blinds thee, it makes thee forget thine own lowliness and the greatness of the King of kings.

THE SOUL. Ah, I remember both, and this remembrance of itself kindles, stirs up, and inflames my love.

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* In the person of the apostles.

THE ANGELS. Continue then to love Him, and to seek Him thus, and doubtless thou shalt find Him at last.

THE SOUL. And ye, if ye see my Beloved, tell Him that I languish with love!

PRAISED FOREVER BE THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS!

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